

Iraq rejects U.N. proposal on pilgrims

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Iraq has rejected U.N. compromise proposals that would enable 22,000 Iraqi pilgrims to travel to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the U.N. Sanctions Committee chairman said Friday. Sanctions Committee Chairman Arnold Peter Van Walsum told reporters after a closed-door meeting that a proposal for the necessary funds to be paid to a third party "has not been taken up by Iraq so far." Iraq is seeking the transfer to the Iraqi central bank of \$44 million for the pilgrims from Iraqi funds held in an oil-for-food escrow account. But Walsum said such a transfer was not permitted by U.N. resolutions. The United Nations, at the request of Iraq, had sought a new ruling from the U.N. Legal Office which has now concluded that the transfer to the Iraqi bank was not allowed. "So we are a little stuck," said Walsum.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراف

Motorola to sue Intel for industrial espionage

AUSTIN (AFP) — The giant U.S. semiconductor manufacturer Motorola Friday announced it was suing computer chip maker Intel and one of its own former employees for alleged industrial espionage. The former Motorola employee, Mark McDermott, was director of the firm's Somerset Centre, which was dedicated to development of the company's PowerPC microprocessors. In the complaint filed here Friday, Motorola said Intel illegally obtained knowledge of the centre's work through McDermott and thereby kept its own employees well informed on Motorola's industry secrets. "Our Somerset unit is the epicenter of high-speed microprocessor design and development at Motorola, and we are seeking to prevent the misappropriation of our valuable intellectual property," said Motorola official Billy Edwards in a written statement.

Volume 24 Number 7093

AMMAN SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 1999, DUEL QADAH 25, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland join NATO

INDEPENDENCE (AFP) — The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland formally joined NATO here on Friday, becoming the first former Warsaw Pact countries to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The three countries' foreign ministers presented instruments of accession to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in a ceremony at the library dedicated to former U.S. President Harry Truman, who signed the original treaty creating the alliance on April 4, 1949 (see earlier story on page 5).

Gas wells explode near Bombay

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Five offshore Indian petroleum gas wells exploded and burned fiercely off the Bombay coast Friday, sparking fears of ecological damage to the Arabian Sea. Officials said the blow-outs occurred midday some 160 kilometres north-west off the western Indian city in the Arabian Sea and "spewed fire and smoke." The state-run Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), which owns the wells, said 85 personnel from a rig were evacuated to safety following the blow-outs. The burning wells, which produced two million cubic metres of gas daily, was shut down for maintenance two weeks ago, an ONGC spokesman said.

Navy punishes sailors for refusing anthrax shots

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Navy said on Friday it had punished 23 sailors bound for the Gulf who refused compulsory anthrax shots the defence department said will protect them against the deadly biological agent. The group is the largest to refuse the vaccine, which Defence Secretary William Cohen ordered for all members of the military over a year ago. Those who refuse the vaccine believe it has not been thoroughly tested and could damage their health. Lt. Cmdr. Mark McDonald, a spokesman for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, told Reuters the 23 sailors from the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier were demoted by one rank, given 45 days extra duty, restricted to the vessel for 45 days and ordered to pay fines equal to one month's pay.

One killed in clash in Nigeria

LAGOS (AFP) — An elderly Nigerian man was hacked to death by angry youths after he tried to persuade them not to seize a major flow station belonging to Anglo-Dutch oil group Shell, police said Friday. Forty-four people were detained for questioning following the killing. Thursday, of 77-year-old George Onobichere by a large group of youths in Alesere, southeastern Nigeria, police told local reporters. Youths also attacked two of the man's sons, they said.

Frozen grave of nomad discovered

VENICE (AP) — Archaeologists found the 2,300-year-old grave of a nomad prince preserved in permanent ice in Kazakhstan — only the third such find ever, they said Friday. The tomb, dating back to the 4th century B.C., was found in Berel, on the slopes of the Altai mountains in Kazakhstan, a republic in Central Asia. The grave was preserved in permafrost, a layer of never-thawing ice. The site is yielding new information about the ancient cultures of Central Asia, archaeologists said Friday in Venice.

Cohen links U.S. aid to Israeli compliance with Wye accord

Israel concerned about U.S. arms sales to Egypt

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen called on Israeli leaders Friday to quickly and fully implement the stalled Wye River peace accord with the Palestinians or face a hold-up in \$1.2 billion in U.S. aid linked to the land-for-security deal. "We believe there must be full implementation of Wye and that must take place soon," Cohen said in a thinly veiled criticism of Israel's decision to suspend further West Bank withdrawals required by the October agreement. He was speaking during a joint press conference with Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens. Cohen went on to make clear that \$1.2 billion in additional U.S. aid that Israel requested to meet what it says are security costs linked to the West Bank withdrawals would be forthcoming only once all the pullouts have been carried out. "We aren't exploring any way to alter the time frame at which that money will be available," he said. Under the U.S.-brokered peace agreement, Israel

promised to withdraw in three phases over 90 days from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank and take other steps to expand Palestinian autonomy. In exchange the Palestinians agreed to a series of measures designed to halt anti-Israeli violence by Islamist and other militants. Israeli officials have reportedly asked Washington to disburse part of the \$1.2 billion aid package in light of its initial withdrawal from an additional two per cent of the West Bank. Israel says the funds are needed to move military bases, build roads and take other measures to adjust to expanding Palestinian rule in the West Bank. But Cohen's remarks Friday reconfirmed the U.S. stand that the funds would only be released once the full Wye deal has been implemented. The deal also involves \$300 million in additional aid to the Palestinian National Authority. Cohen also held out the prospect of more U.S. funding for the \$1.6 billion Arrow missile project Israel

hopes will thwart the threat of ballistic missiles from regional foes. Cohen, who announced a series of arms deals with Washington's Arab allies on a nine-nation Middle East tour, reaffirmed strong U.S. ties with Israel and pledged to maintain the Jewish state's "qualitative edge" in the region. Arens said after meeting Cohen in Tel Aviv that Israel would decide within two months on the purchase of U.S. fighter jets worth an estimated \$2.5 billion. Cohen told reporters in Tel Aviv the United States was exploring ways to fund research and development on a third battery for Arrow, an Israeli-produced missile jointly funded by Washington. Arens said Israel would soon decide on the purchase of U.S. F-15 and F-16 fighter jets. Washington announced last September that it had offered to sell 30 F-15 and 60 F-16 fighter jets to Israel for an estimated \$5 billion. The advanced F-15I ground attack jets are built by Boeing and the F-16 C

and D models by Lockheed Martin. Each package would be worth \$2.5 billion but Israel has not yet said how many planes or which model it might buy. Meanwhile, Israel said it was worried about an arms build-up in the Middle East after the United States gave the green light to billions of dollars of weapons sales to Egypt and Gulf states. Israel is "concerned about the level of armament in the Middle East as well as lack of military-to-military contacts between the Israeli and Egyptian military," a senior military official told journalists. "The bulk of the Egyptian military is trained, deployed and indoctrinated vis-à-vis the IDF [Israeli Defense Force], whatever they say on the Hill," he said. The Israeli official, who requested anonymity, said the Middle East remained a "largely over-armed" region. "At the core of our concern is that the region is over-armed in the conventional sense," the official said, implying that the U.S. weapons sales would increase Israel's needs.



Members of the Palestinian police force stand on the alert in riot gear Friday in the south Gaza Strip town of Rafah, where riots erupted following a death sentence imposed on Rafah resident Ra'd Attar for killing a member of a security force (AP photo)

Arafat says Gaza stable following deadly riots

RAFAH (R) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Friday he was confident tension had eased after anger at the death sentence imposed on an alleged Islamist activist burst into two days of rioting. "We have to thank all those who made all their efforts to achieve stability and control in Rafah," Arafat told reporters upon his return to Gaza from talks with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in London and a brief stop-over at the Netherlands. Two Palestinian teenagers were shot dead and at least 85 people were hurt in clashes with police sparked by a military court's sentencing to death a former member of the militant Hamas group over the February killing of a security officer. The condemned man, Ra'd Al Attar, and two others sentenced to long prison terms for the killing of police officer Rifat Judeh, were all Palestinian security officials. The demonstrators said the men were not granted a fair trial in the military court and demanded a retrial. Rights

groups have demanded Arafat stay the execution and ensure a fair judicial process, including a right to appeal. Journalists, who had been barred from entering Rafah during the clashes, were escorted through the town by the Deputy Police Chief Brigadier General Salim Al Burdaini in an effort to demonstrate the situation had stabilised. "The situation is getting back to normal but not fully," Burdaini said. "It is clear that Islamic extremists are inciting the people against the Palestinian Authority." The riot zone appeared calm on Friday morning. Security forces escorted journalists out of Rafah before mosques emptied after Friday prayers, when witnesses said some 1,500 people marched through the streets. They said security forces kept their distance from demonstrators chanting "No to treachery!" and "We want justice!" Burdaini said police made no arrests after the riots in an

attempt to let passions cool. He said a large number of Palestinian political factions had met over the past 24 hours to try and calm the situation. "All political factions met yesterday and unanimously called on President Yasser Arafat not to ratify the death penalty and to form a committee to investigate the death of the teenagers," Mohammad Boukhi, a Rafah teacher, told Reuters. Arafat's mainstream Fateh faction also issued a statement urging the president not to ratify the death sentence. "We in Fateh mourn with deep sorrow our two hero martyrs... who were killed by the irresponsible and mischievous bullets of Palestinian security members," the statement said. Palestinian police chief Ghazi Jabali said on Thursday that the two teenagers were killed by shots fired from an Israeli military post near the riot zone. Israel denied the charge. Hamas said Palestinian security men killed the teenagers.

House session expected to be extended for debate on government's policy statement

By Tareq Ayyoub
AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah is expected to issue a Royal Decree to extend the current session of the Lower House to enable the chamber to debate the government's policy statement, deputies said Friday. Bassam Haddadin, deputy speaker of the 80-member House, said the issue was discussed with Prime Minister Abdul-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh during a meeting with deputies two days after he was appointed as prime minister on March 4.

The meeting between Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali and Rawabdeh was attended by Majali's assistants, Ahmad Ajarmah and Mohammed Al Kuz, in addition to Haddadin. "The discussion with prime minister focused on the possibility of extending the House session by one month to debate the government policy statement," Haddadin told the Jordan Times. The House was scheduled to recess on March 27. "But we agreed that if such a

thing happened, the third ordinary session of the Lower House, scheduled to convene on Oct. 1, should not be postponed," the deputy said. The extension of the session was taken at the request of Rawabdeh, Haddadin said. According to the Constitution, the government must submit its policy statement to Parliament within 30 days of its formation for a vote of confidence. Deputy Ajarmah expected the House will start the debate by April 2 following the Eid Al

Adha holiday, which will coincide with the end of the Hajj season late this month. Ajarmah indicated that 12 deputies will leave Jordan for Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj this month. "They will be away for at least 15 days," he said. One Cabinet minister, who asked not to be named, hinted that the government's policy statement could be submitted to Parliament as early as the first week of April, adding that the date has not been finalised yet.

Israel protests to EU over position on Jerusalem

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel issued a formal protest Friday against a European Union (EU) statement challenging Israel's sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem. The Likud Party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the same time incorporated the EU stance into its campaign for May elections, saying its left-wing opponents will abandon control over the Arab eastern sector of Jerusalem to the Palestinians. Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon sent a letter to Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany, the current EU president, categorically rejecting an EU message describing the status of occupied Jerusalem as a "separate body" from Israel. The message was transmitted to Sharon on March 1 by Germany's ambassador to Israel in response to an Israeli protest over a meeting of EU ambassadors with Palestinian officials in Arab east Jerusalem. In the "note verbal," or informal diplomatic message, the EU rejected Israel's right to prevent such meetings and noted that Israeli sovereignty over occupied Jerusalem was not recognised under international law since the 1947 U.N. partition plan which created the Jewish state made the city an international zone. In his response, Sharon said Israel "cannot but reject the

content of the note verbal." "Every nation doubtless has the right to determine the location of its capital city, as indeed Germany itself has recently done in declaring the city of Berlin as its capital," he said. "Some 3,000 years ago the Jewish people declared Jerusalem to be its capital, a fact which was repeated 51 years ago by the state of Israel in Jerusalem," Sharon said. "The government of Israel headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will never allow the division of Jerusalem once again," he said, referring to the illegal annexation of Arab east Jerusalem after the sector's occupation in the 1967 war. Sharon said this "determination [is] shared by all shades of opinion in Israel." Israeli opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak, who is challenging Netanyahu for the premiership in May elections, also protested the EU stance and sent a similar letter of protest to Fischer. "There is a wide national consensus, whether the Europeans like it or not, about Jerusalem being the united, sovereign capital of Israel forever, period," Barak said in the letter. But Netanyahu, ignoring Barak's stated views, quickly moved to capitalise on the row in his tough campaign for

reelection. In a radio interview Netanyahu said the previous Labour government had allowed the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to operate with impunity out of Orient House, the unofficial PLO headquarters in Arab east Jerusalem which was also at the centre of the dispute with the EU. Under the Oslo interim peace accords with the Palestinians, the PNA autonomy government is not authorised to operate in Arab east Jerusalem. But the accords also require Israel to negotiate the future status of the city, where Palestinians hope to establish the capital of their own state, in so-called final status talks which should have been completed this May but have yet to start. Netanyahu successfully campaigned for election in 1996 on the slogan that Labour "will divide Jerusalem" by granting Palestinians control over east Jerusalem. Likud officials said Thursday that in light of the EU initiative they were preparing a new campaign drive around the slogan "Netanyahu — a strong peace and a united Jerusalem." "Barak will give in to [Palestinian President Yasser] Arafat on the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Likud said in a statement.

Europeans mostly upbeat at Lafontaine resignation

PARIS (AFP) — European governments and markets were mostly relieved Friday at the resignation of German Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine, whose turbulent four-month tenure was marked by discord with his boss, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. France, whose ties with Germany had been strained as a result, seemed in particular to view Lafontaine's departure as a positive development. "Clearly the divergences between the two men could not be ignored, and that was one of the things that was making negotiations so difficult," said French Agriculture Minister Jean Glavany, referring to Schroeder and Lafontaine. French Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn "regretted" Lafontaine's resignation, but conceded that cooperation with his successor, Hans Eichel, would "take place under better conditions." In London, the euro strengthened on the world's biggest currency exchange as economists hailed Lafontaine's departure as a turning point for the troubled single currency. British analysts also hoped that the departure of the combative minister, who had alienated the business community, would ease tensions between the political elite and the technocrats who since January have set lending rates inside the 11-nation euro-zone. But Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schuessel voiced concern at the timing of the



File picture dated Jan. 10 showing Oskar Lafontaine, right, who resigned Thursday as German finance minister and Social Democrat party leader, together with Hessen state Prime Minister Hans Eichel during a campaign rally for Hessen state elections (AFP photo)

pean Union, has a stable government," said Spanish government spokesman Josep Pique. The Spanish press, however, said the change, only 13 days before the Berlin summit, was not likely to "contribute to the success of this meeting." It was "very bad news, for Germany and for Europe," and "complicates" final negotiations on Agenda 2000 EU reform, said El Pais. Belgium's financial l'Echo called the changeover a victory for the euro, and for the European Central Bank, which it said would now "have a lot more elbow room." The Finnish daily Helsingin Sanomat said the change augured ill for Finland's EU presidency which begins next July because it threatened to delay adoption of Agenda 2000. In Germany, employers were clearly overjoyed at the departure of a hodgey man they blamed for tax-and-spend economic policies, although trade unions, which had been big supporters of Lafontaine, were glum. Olaf Henkel, president of the Federation of German Industry (BDI), cautioned that Lafontaine's resignation was only a first step. "It depends what happens next," he told NDR-4 Info radio. "The important thing is that the policies that were associated with the name of Lafontaine also change."

Jordanian bankers need time before investing in new European currency

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Several Jordanian bankers and investors said they need time to consider investing in the euro, Europe's single currency unit since January 1.

They said the new international currency has to prove itself in global financial markets before they initiate investments in the shared currency — the main rival of the almighty American dollar — as the world's premier monetary unit.

Jordanian banks joined the rest of the world in trading in the euro earlier this year, opening accounts and letters of credit. But the Jordanian dinar remains backed by foreign currencies and is fixed to the dollar at a rate of 0.708 fils.

"The question of how quickly local investors will invest in the euro depends on the credibility of the European Central Bank," said Hilal Abu Zeid, regional manager for research and investment at the Cairo Amman Bank.

"The euro must establish a track record of monetary stability and of low inflation before it can command a lot of demand in the international market," Abu Zeid said.

He was speaking at Wednesday's one-day seminar on the impact of the euro on Jordan's economy. The seminar was organised by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in cooperation with the Young Entrepreneurs Association.

The euro has replaced 11 European currencies, notably the Deutsche Mark, and the French Franc, while the new European Central Bank (ECB) is managing the

monetary policy for European countries using the single money.

The ECB has been made an independent entity to avoid the possibility that it could be susceptible to political influence by individual governments.

Local bankers say credibility remains a large factor influencing the international attraction of currencies such as the euro.

They said they believe Jordanian businesspeople also will consider the issue

'The question of how quickly local investors will invest in the euro depends on the credibility of the European Central Bank'

— Abu Zeid

of interest rates on the euro as opposed to interest rates on the U.S. dollar before they invest in the euro.

The economic situation in the 11 European countries compared to the economic situation in the United States is another element determining Jordanian investment in the European currency, bankers said at the meeting.

"Despite all the factors

that will determine our use of the euro, Jordan will have to use the euro to some extent when in trade and investment," Abu Zeid told the Jordan Times on the sidelines of the seminar.

Investment, he said, will depend on "where the EURO is going and the perception of its exchange rates."

Participants, who also discussed the euro and its effects on Europe and her trading partners, agreed that a bipolar world will exist with the dominance of both the U.S. currency and the euro.

This, they said, was witnessed during the 1930's and 1940's when the U.S. dollar rose and the sterling pound declined in a period characterized by turmoil and large fluctuations in exchange rates.

Some economists said they expected such turmoil to be repeated today.

"In the coming years we might see a lot more volatility in the foreign exchange market than we are accustomed to," said Abu Zeid.

Participants said this situation will be reflected in Jordan's trade through prices, depending on wide fluctuations and which of the two major currencies the country currency is fixed to.

For example, if the Jordanian dinar is fixed against the dollar and the latter declines against the euro, then imports from Europe will become more expensive and Jordan would have imported inflation.

If the opposite were to happen, then Jordan would have cheaper imports from Europe.

"On the investment side there will be money made and lost according to

which currency Jordan is fixed to," Abu Zeid concluded.

At the seminar, Middle East Representative of the German Commerzbank Hans Georg Priner gave a presentation on the euro's impact on Europe and its trading partners.

He said that by the year 2002 all Europeans are to use the euro.

Because of a lack of close European integration and coordination in economic and political policies, many in Europe believe monetary union was premature, particularly without political union.

According to Priner, "a monetary union could be a catalyst to bring about political union."

Some European countries, such as England, Sweden, and Denmark, have not opted for monetary union as they perceive it as a threat to nationalistic policies. Membership in the monetary union dictates that this prerogative be transferred to the ECB in Frankfurt, the only institution to determine European monetary policy.

Unemployment poses the largest threat to Europe, where there are 18 million unemployed. Monetary Union is expected to aggravate unemployment in Europe.

"Greater competition, and bigger entities will create unemployment and a shift of industries from weak regions to stronger ones," Priner told the Jordan Times.

Germany to provide \$38m in aid, agrees to \$28m debt swap

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — Germany has agreed to provide Jordan with Deutsche marks 68 million (\$38 million) in financial and technical assistance for 1999, an aid increase of eight per cent than last year.

The German embassy's charge d'affaires, Mathias Olme Mueller said Thursday the aid package will be divided into two tranches: \$32 million in loans mainly to be used for water and wastewater projects, and the remaining \$5.6 million in grants for technical assistance.

"The bulk of the first tranche will be allocated to Irbid's waste-water treatment plant," Mueller added.

Germany last year provided Jordan with a JD6.6 million for the construction of a plant that will provide the greater Irbid area with a comprehensive sewage system.

Mueller said Germany has

also agreed to swap \$28 million in Jordanian debts to Bonn, bringing up to \$100.4 million the total debt swap granted in the last few years.

He said an additional \$15 million in soft loans granted to Jordan last year but not used will be reallocated this year as a grant.

Jordanian sectors standing to gain out of the aid package are water, agriculture, environment, information systems, and institutional support.

The agreement, signed on Wednesday between Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and the Director General of the German Economic Cooperation Department, was part of an annual meeting to discuss the volume of aid provided by Germany each year.

Germany is one of Jordan's largest donors. Between 1962 and 1998, it provided the Kingdom with \$951 million in soft loans and grants.

Jordanian tourism professionals win international award

AMMAN (J.T.) — Four Jordanian tourist experts have been awarded the "Golden Helm" international tourism award.

These tourism professionals were officially awarded Golden Helm during an official ceremony and in an international in Milan, Italy, in February 1999.

The awardees are: Zaki Abdullatif, manager of Kuwait Airways in Jordan, who was also elected as vice-president of the international association "Golden Helmsens of Tourism;" Sami Joudah, director of marketing and sales of Saudia Airlines in Jordan; Usama Faraj, manager of Royal Jordanian, Italy; and Awni Kassar,

general manager of Petra Tours.

The Golden Helm award is given to tourism professionals who have contributed to the development of international tourism with competence, dedication, and professionalism.

The "Golden Helmsens of Tourism" was founded in 1974 by international travel experts including the Faik Bisharat. The Jordan branch was created in 1998. His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein is the honorary president, Nader Dahabi is president of the board, and Saeed Sawalha is vice-president. Membership includes a selection of travel and tourism personnel, hotels, and public relations and publishing enterprises.

IAF issues fatwa on illicit profit draft law exclusions

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — An Islamic Action Front (IAF) committee has issued a fatwa (religious injunction) condemning recent indications from senators and deputies that they may exclude themselves from an anti-corruption draft law requiring officials to declare their assets upon taking office.

"The decision is a flagrant violation of the principles of justice and equality... and is null and void from a religious point of view," said an IAF statement, issued on Thursday and signed by Shari'a Committee President Ibrahim Zeid Keilani.

The Legal Affairs Committee of the Lower and Upper House last week reached a consensus on the anti-corruption draft, which has been sitting on the Senate's shelves for seven years due to disagreements between the two Houses.

The draft, officially titled "Law Against Illicit Profit," aimed to fill a vacuum deriving from the absence of a ministerial code of conduct.

It was submitted to Parliament by the government

in 1990 following a request from the Lower House.

It was volleyed back and

'The decision is a flagrant violation of the principles of justice and equality... and is null and void from a religious point of view'

— IAF

forth from the Lower to the Upper House, which rejected it twice, over two years. Senators objected to seven articles of the law, including one stipulating that they, in addition to ministers and deputies, also submit a personal financial assessment upon appointment.

According to the Constitution, Parliament must

convene a joint session to discuss and vote on drafts that have been rejected twice by either House. Senators and deputies must muster a two-thirds majority before a draft becomes law in such circumstances.

After last week's meeting, chaired by Senate President Zeid Rifa'i and attended by Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali, senators said deputies appeared convinced of accepting the viewpoint of their colleagues in the Upper House.

If approved by a joint session, expected to convene next year, the Senate's proposal would exempt deputies and senators from declaring their assets — including property, stocks, business interests, bonds and securities — and from providing relevant legal documentation upon their swearing in to office. The law would still be applicable to Cabinet members and other categories of high-ranking civil servants.

A chorus of protest from opposition parties and independent politicians raised after last week's meeting preceded the

IAF's fatwa.

"The [parliamentarians'] decision contradicts Islamic teachings, and all that we have learned from the Sunna Nabawieh (tradition of the Prophet Mohammad) and His companions, namely that all those in authority must be held accountable, with no exceptions," the IAF said, quoting verses of the Holy Koran and the Hadith (Sayings) on upholding the principles of equality and justice in governance.

"Nations before you were destroyed because, when the high-ranking among them stole, they were let go, while the meek among them who stole were punished," said one of the Hadith, recalled in the IAF statement.

Columnists also voiced criticism of parliamentarians' inclination to omit themselves from the categories requested to account for their assets upon taking office.

Al Ra'i's Saleh Qallab wrote yesterday that "deputies, elected by the people to protect the national interest and check the government, should be the first ones to fight corruption."

Authorities investigate assault of child, three children killed in fire

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Authorities are searching for two youths who reportedly assaulted a 10-year-old boy in the Wihdat area Wednesday, according to official sources.

The victim, who could not be identified because of his age, was found bleeding on a Wihdat street, the source said.

The official told the Jordan Times Friday that the child received severe cuts to his front thighs that were probably caused by switchblades.

"Officials suspect the child might have been molested, although there

are no traces of sodomy," the source said.

He added that the child, who suffered from mild mental difficulties, informed police that two youths dragged him to a deserted area and molested him.

He added the child suffered from bruises, biting and finger scratches on some parts of his body.

Meanwhile, three children were reportedly killed when a fire engulfed their house in the Hiteen Refugee Camp in Zarqa, according to Civil Defence Department (CDD) officials.

The three children, Mariam, six, Ibrahim, four, and

Ahmad, two, had been left alone in their home on Tuesday by their parents while a lit kerosene heater burned in their absence.

The official told the Jordan Times Friday evening.

"Most probably one of the children accidentally turned the heater over and a fire engulfed the house," the official said.

The CDD rescue teams were alerted by neighbours who reported seeing smoke and flames emitting from the windows.

Two of the three victims were burnt beyond recognition, the official told the Jordan Times.

In other incident on Thursday, police were

investigating the suicide of a 29-year-old man in the Mahatta neighbourhood, one source said.

The source said the victim, M. T., was found by his brother on the roof of the building in which he resides with a plastic rope wrapped around his neck.

The source added that the victim, who had returned to the Kingdom four days before his death after completing his education in Romania, "left no note and never made any suggestion to any of his family members indicating that he was suffering from any problems."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arabs seek coordinated stand ahead of Arafat's visit to Washington

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Information and Culture Nasser Lawzi said on Friday that Jordan under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah seeks to develop its relations with all Arab countries, particularly Egypt. In an interview with Sawt Al Arab Radio, Lawzi said the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Palestine will hold a meeting to coordinate their efforts in support of the Palestinian stand prior to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's visit to Washington.

Dalabih named ARA head

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Friday appointing Yusef Dalabih as president of the Aqaba Region Authority (ARA), following the earlier resignation of Mohammad Smadi.

Labour minister meets labour union president

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Labour Eid Fayed on Friday met with the president and members of the Federation of Jordanian Labour Unions.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

German film "Das Leben ist eine Baustelle" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Wednesday March 17 at 6:00 p.m.

"The Mask of Zorro" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman on Sunday March 14 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 46504578)

LECTURE

"Poetry in the Classroom: Teacher's Requests" by Dr. Nicholas Linfield, at the British Council, Jabal Amman on Monday March 15 at 5:00 p.m.



Palestinian affairs department offers journalists tours of camps

AMMAN (Petra) — The Department of Palestinian Affairs today is organising a series of tours by journalists to the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan to focus attention on the situation in the camps and the services provided by the Jordanian government.

Department Director Ibrahim Badran announced the plans at a press conference and said the tours will continue until June 5. He added that they are designed to draw public attention to the government's efforts to improve the living condition of the camps residents and the infrastructure services being introduced.

Badran said Jordan's policy towards the issue of Palestinians remains clear and unchanged. The Kingdom seeks the restoration of the refugees' rights within the framework of the

international legitimacy, which does not encroach on their rights as Jordanian citizens, he said.

Referring to Jordan's assistance to the refugees, Badran said the Kingdom backs the Palestinian quest to establish an independent state on Palestinian soil, and has played a supportive role at the international level in defence of the Palestinian people's right to repatriation and compensation.

He said by pursuing this policy, Jordan is protecting its own national interests and those of the Palestinians in conformity with the interests of the Arab Nation.

According to Badran, Jordan is host to 42 per cent of all Palestinian refugees according to the records of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and directly or indirectly spends nearly \$350 million

on the camps annually.

Badran pointed out that in addition to its role of host, Jordan is considered the largest donor nation to the refugees. It is natural and reasonable for the Kingdom to play a central role in dealing with their problem and seeking to help them regain their legitimate rights, he said.

Badran estimated the number of Palestinian refugees in Jordan at 1.5 million, of whom he said 18 per cent reside in the camps. He said donor nations and international organisations realise the heavy social, education and health burden borne by Jordan in dealing with the refugees and providing them better living standards.

Badran said the tour of the 13 refugee camps will enable the public to examine firsthand the residents' life.

Government allocates \$12m to credit corp.

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Agriculture Hashem Shoubh on Friday said the government has allocated JD12 million to the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) to be extended to livestock farmers in the form of loans.

Speaking at a meeting with representatives of foodstuff merchants' association and the fruit and vegetable exporters society, Shoubh said the government is trying to find solutions to problems facing farmers and to support them as much as possible.

He added that this year is an exceptional one because of the draught facing the region.

He said, "we will keep in touch with international organisations in order to help solve this problem."

Shoubh said the Kingdom's agricultural sector requires that public and private sector efforts be pooled to develop this sector through investing in "our lands and potential resources by planting saplings suitable for the country, that do not need large quantities of water in order to compete other products worldwide."

The minister called on the fruit and vegetable producers' society to cooperate with farmers in order to develop packaging and packing.

E. Timor cautious on Indonesia's ballot offer

DILI, East Timor (R) — Residents in the bloodied territory of East Timor reacted with caution Friday to news they will be able to vote in a U.N.-organised ballot on whether they want autonomy within Indonesia.

Rejection of the proposal could open the way for independence.

Most people in the dusty seaside capital of Dili welcomed news of the ballot, announced by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

But a senior pro-independence official said that the Indonesian military should be withdrawn before the vote.

"If the consultation and the voting take place when the Indonesian military are still here, it is quite difficult for U.S. because they will try to intimidate our people to vote for them," said David Dias Ximinez, a senior member of the presidential secretariat of East Timor's National Political Commission (CPN), which acts as a parliament in waiting.

"If some day some international police could come here, it would be a great advantage for us, to let us say what we want," he said.

His comments were echoed by local residents. "It is good that we have been given a chance to choose. But unless we are allowed to make our choice in peace I fear we may see more problems here," said Victor de Jesus, a school teacher shopping in Dili's market.

Many residents said they had been following the United Nations-sponsored talks between Indonesia and Portugal over the fate of East Timor future on the radio.

Jakarta and Lisbon have agreed to a U.N.-organised ballot to determine if the 800,000 people of the former Portuguese colony want to remain part of Indonesia or want independence.

Residents also gave only a guarded welcome to reports that pro-Indonesia militias and jailed leader of the CPN Xanana Gusmao had agreed to discuss the territory's fate without violence.

Pro and anti-Jakarta groups clash frequently in the impoverished territory. Scores have been killed in the past six months.

Ximinez said that the pro-independence Falintil guerrilla fighters would not



U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan (centre) and Indonesian foreign minister Ali Alatas (left) listen as Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama speaks at a news conference at the United Nations in New York. Annan, Alatas and Gama spoke after it was announced that the two countries had agreed on a 'direct' ballot for the people of East Timor to decide whether they wanted autonomy or independence (Reuters photo)

surrender until the Indonesian army had left.

"A ceasefire must be between Falintil and the Indonesian army... when the Indonesian army goes out from East Timor, Falintil will come down (from the mountains) and lay down their weapons," he said.

Fernando Cabaterra, a pro-independence activist looking after refugees who have fled pro-Indonesian militias, said he believed an overwhelming majority of East Timorese would choose independence.

"There would be no need for a referendum if the military were all pulled out —

then it would be clear that 99 per cent of the population want independence," he said.

"Indonesia could have won a referendum if they held it 10 years ago, but it is too late now," he said. Ximinez was more cautious in his assessment. "I don't want to say that

we are in the majority, but you have to see that for 23 years we have been struggling for our independence," he said.

Indonesia invaded the eastern half of Timor island in 1975 and annexed it the following year in a move not recognised by the United Nations.

KLA suggest they back Kosovo peace plan

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels suggested Friday they would accept a U.S.-sponsored peace plan for the war-torn Serbian province. Their backing would turn up the heat on Serbia to sign or face NATO air strikes.

A statement issued by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) said the plan "was not the solution that we would want the most... but it does not close all doors to future roads."

In another indication that the guerrilla leadership was leaning towards accepting the deal pushed by the world powers, the statement said: "The future of Kosovo depends mostly on the Albanians themselves and their cooperation with the international community."

The statement was issued on the KLA's Kosovo press agency after a reported meeting of top rebel leaders in the hills of the Drenica region west of Pristina. State radio in neighbouring Albania quoted unidentified sources as saying that KLA commander Hashim Thaci, the chief Albanian delegate to peace talks scheduled for Monday, had urged other KLA leaders to accept the plan.

Pacific Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova also suggested the plan would be signed in Paris, although he did not specifically say the KLA had agreed to do so.

"The negotiations are over. The document is final, and we'll go to Paris to sign because there is no more time to negotiate," he told reporters in Pristina.

If Kosovo Albanians accept the agreement at the Paris talks, pressure will focus on the

Serbs to sign. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic and other Serbian leaders have rejected the plan because it foresees NATO-led troops to implement it. But NATO has warned that unilateral rejection by the Yugoslav and Serb side will unleash air strikes on their strategic targets.

Although Kosovo's population is overwhelmingly Albanian, it is a province of Yugoslavia's two republics. More than a year of Kosovo fighting between government forces and rebels seeking independence has left more than 2,000 dead and hundreds of thousands uprooted.

A first round of peace talks in Rambouillet, France, last month ended inconclusively, but the Albanian delegation sent strong signals that it would sign before the talks reconvene Monday.

International mediation efforts to end the year-long war continued with talks by Russia's foreign minister and top Yugoslav officials, including a meeting set for Friday with President Slobodan Milosevic.

Backing Serbia, a traditional Russian ally in its rejection of NATO forces, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said he agreed with his hosts that "a political solution must be found first."

"Once a political settlement is achieved, we can talk about its implementation with participation of international factors," he said Thursday, after meeting with Yugoslav counterpart Zvezdan Jovanovic.

"Russia is ready to contribute, to the extent to which

Belgrade agrees" — a signal the Kremlin would not force its ally to accept foreign troops on its territory.

Kosovo Albanian rebel leaders who joined in a pledge to sign the peace plan, which calls for autonomy for the Albanian-majority province, remain reluctant to do so because of the requirement that the KLA, which is fighting for independence, disarm.

The U.S. House of Representatives voted late Thursday in favour of a non-binding resolution supporting the Clinton administration's use of U.S. troops, if necessary, as part of a NATO peacekeeping operation.

Thursday, Yugoslav troops pounded ethnic Albanian rebel positions near Kosovo's second-largest city, Prizren. Thursday sending hundreds of ethnic Albanians fleeing the buildup of firepower.

Tanks and mortars dug in around the village of Hoca Zgradska shelled KLA guerrillas about a kilometre away. The fighting was the first in the area since a massive Yugoslav offensive in July and August. The Serb-run media centre said three of the Serb forces were wounded.

Clashes in the north near the town of Vucitum killed a Yugoslav soldier, according to international monitors, and the KLA said one of its fighters also died. Serb authorities denied any deaths on their side but said three were wounded in those battles.

Hundreds of refugees remained afraid to return to their homes at another recent flashpoint, along the Macedonian border.

Kosovo peace monitor says violations creeping up

BRUSSELS (R) — William Walker, the chief Kosovo peace monitor, Friday painted a bleak picture of increased ceasefire violations, a steady rise in Yugoslav troop deployments and bureaucratic harassment by Belgrade.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was also guilty of breaching the truce by carrying out deliberate provocations, Walker said.

Briefing reporters after talks with NATO's permanent representatives, the head of the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) said he did not know the motives behind the Yugoslav army's recent deployments, but they were in violation of Belgrade's pledges.

"The level of non-compliance has gone up and is going up — both sides have been out and about looking for trouble and finding it for the past four months, and with increasing intensity in recent weeks," he said.

KVM observers were being denied access by both sides

and the verification mission, operated by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), was facing "every kind of example" of "bureaucratic meddling by the Yugoslav government."

In spite of Belgrade's violation of pledges made to U.S. Balkans envoy Richard Holbrooke last October, Walker said the KVM presence had given Kosovo's two million people a level of confidence and security they would not enjoy otherwise.

The KVM currently has a total staff of about 3,000, of whom 1,380 are international. Walker said NATO ambassadors had expressed their concern about the mission's safety, especially in light of recent incidents of blatant harassment.

But he said the operation would continue for as long as the OSCE believed it was able to carry out its core tasks.

Asked if Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was deliberately restraining his forces to avoid a "humanitarian catastrophe" that could trigger NATO air strikes, Walker said: "I wish I knew... what sort of a leash is attached... and just exactly what President Milosevic is thinking of doing."

Milosevic is refusing to accept a NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo, threatening to scupper a political settlement giving autonomy to Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority.

NATO says it is prepared to use air strikes to get an agreement, but the NATO allies would not be prepared to bomb Yugoslav military targets simply to force Milosevic to the negotiating table.

"The only basis for the use of force is to avert a humanitarian catastrophe," one NATO diplomat said. By NATO's own measure, the Yugoslav security forces have certainly reneged on promises to keep their presence lower but have not repeated last summer's all-out offensive which sparked a flood of refugees.

suicide from overwork, following a similar ruling in 1996. One other case is before a court.

Iijima was not immediately available for comment Friday. But in an interview with the Associated Press last year, she said she sued because otherwise her husband would have died in vain.

"I felt so sorry for my husband," she said then in a telephone interview from Nagano, 180 kilometres northwest of Tokyo.

"People start out working for their livelihood, for their families, for happiness. Then why does it have to end up this way?"

Iijima filed for government money shortly after her husband died, but her application was turned down by the local authorities in 1995. The Iijimas had two children.

Like others who take their lives after working too hard, her husband was the kind of person who couldn't say, "no," Iijima recalled.

Lawyers familiar with suicides from overwork say the workers leave behind notes apologising repeatedly for failing to measure up. They rarely blame their employers or co-workers — only themselves.

Rwandan prime minister accused of genocide

KIGALI (AFP) — Rwandan authorities have charged Prime Minister Pierre-Celestin Rwigyema with genocide, judicial sources told AFP Friday, adding that the Kigali prosecutor's office had opened a case.

Rwigyema, a member of the central African country's Hutu majority, heads the Democratic and Republican Movement (MRD), and has been prime minister since August 1997.

He replaced Faustin Twagiramungu, also a Hutu, who had become prime minister immediately after Rwanda's 1994 civil war, when political parties appointed members to parliament.

Hutu extremists, whose eth-

nic group then made up 85 per cent of Rwanda's population, against the Tutsis' 14 per cent, slaughtered more than half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus during the war before a Tutsi rebel army swept to victory in a lightning three-month campaign.

Rwigyema, who qualified as an economist at the University of Kinshasa, hails from Gitarama, in the south.

He headed a private print works in Kigali before the war and became a member of the MRD's liberal wing, opposed to Hutu hardliners in the party who were adamantly against any power-sharing between Hutus, then in control of

Rwanda, and Tutsis.

After the start of the war, sparked by the shooting down on April 6, 1994, of a plane carrying Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryamira, the Hutu president of neighbouring Burundi, who also died, Rwigyema sought refuge in a Kigali hotel.

He went to the luxurious Mille Collines (Thousand Hills) hotel to escape death at the hands of the Hutu Interhamwe militiamen whose preferred weapon was the machete.

Tutsi soldiers then led him to safety in a zone they controlled, where he sat out the rest of the war.

Court orders Japanese government to pay for suicide from overwork

TOKYO (AP) — In a landmark ruling, a Japanese court found Friday that a man killed himself because he was exhausted by overwork and ordered the government to compensate his family.

The Nagano district court ruled that Mori Iijima, 30, was driven to depression by clocking 150 hours of overtime a month at his machine shop. He hanged himself in his garage in 1985.

Under Japanese law, the spouse and dependent children of a worker who dies from a work-related injury or illness can receive payments of about 2 million yen (\$17,000) a year from the government.

But proving in court that a suicide was caused by overwork is extremely difficult. In this case, Iijima suffered from insomnia, extreme exhaustion and fears, which experts testified were signs of depression brought on by working nearly 80-hour weeks.

"We welcome the ruling," said Fumio Matsumura, lawyer for Chieko Iijima, who filed the lawsuit in 1997.

"Up to now, the government has taken the view that suicide is the individual's choice and refused to help families."

Matsumura believes the ruling will pave the way for others

who have lost a relative to suicide from overwork. He estimated that as many as several thousand such cases could be filed in a nation dominated by an intense work ethic.

Matsumura and other lawyers say that such suicides are on the rise. The phenomenon is so common that there is even a term for it: "Karo-jisatsu."

The labour ministry official in charge of the case, Hiroji Koike, said the government was still studying the ruling, including the possibility of appeal.

If Iijima ultimately wins out, she will receive payments dating back to the time of her husband's death.

In 1997, in a similar case, the court ordered Dentsu, a leading advertising company, to pay 89 million yen (\$742,000) in compensation to the family of Ichiro Oshima, 24, who killed himself after working so hard that he averaged 30 minutes to two hours of sleep a night. He did not get a single day off for 17 months.

The latest ruling is significant, however, because it addresses government liability.

The case is only the second in Japan in which the government was ordered to pay for

NEWS IN BRIEF

Malaysia, Singapore resume talks on bilateral disputes

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Senior officials from Malaysia and Singapore have resumed talks on a package of outstanding bilateral issues and agreed to meet again, a Singapore foreign ministry spokesman said Friday. The officials met Thursday in Singapore to follow up talks between Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and his Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohamad last December in Hanoi on the sidelines of a Southeast Asian regional summit. The fresh discussions by officials covered "the package of outstanding bilateral issues," the spokesman said, without giving details. No date was mentioned for the next round of talks. Among the pending issues are long-term Malaysian water supply to Singapore, customs, immigration and quarantine arrangements on the railway line connecting them, and use of Malaysian airspace by Singapore aircraft. Goh and Mahathir had agreed in Hanoi that outstanding issues would be discussed "as part of an overall political package," the Singapore spokesman noted. Largely ethnic Chinese Singapore was expelled from the Malaysian federation in 1965, after a stormy two-year union, amid a dispute over Kuala Lumpur's preferential treatment for ethnic Malays. Earlier Friday, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said "the faster it (discussions) can be held, the better."

China to provide military assistance to Sierra Leone

FREETOWN (AFP) — China has agreed to give military assistance to President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's government in Sierra Leone to help it fight against a rebel insurgency, state radio announced here. The Beijing "government will not only support Sierra Leone militarily but will also assist all countries which have troops in Sierra Leone," China's Ambassador Wu Yun said, according to the radio. After talks with Kabbah Thursday, the radio report gave no details of when or in what form the military aid would be provided. Nigerian soldiers make up the bulk of the west African ECOMOG military intervention force, which is fighting rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Ghana, Mali, and Guinea are among other countries which have deployed contingents in the war-ravaged nation. Wu also said that China, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the U.N. Security Council, pledged to "use the opportunity to lobby support for Sierra Leone from a wider international community." The radio added that China has called on the RUF to lay down their arms and cooperate with Kabbah's government. RUF rebels and their allies from an ousted junta invaded Freetown on Jan. 6, unleashing more than two weeks of heavy fighting which killed more than 5,000 people and left some 200,000 people homeless.

North Korea lashes out at Millennium bug charges

TOKYO (R) — North Korea lashed out Friday at charges its weapons systems could be at risk of malfunctioning due to the Millennium bug, saying it was ready to teach anyone slandering its military "a bitter lesson." The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), citing overseas news reports that its weapons might be vulnerable to dangerous computer malfunctions, said: "This is intended to create the impression that the quality of the North's military equipment is low and its control system outdated." "This is nothing but a scream of those who are extremely terrified at the self-defensive forces of the North powerful enough to destroy any formidable enemy at one stroke," it added. The Millennium bug could result in widespread computer malfunctions when 1999 turns to 2000 because older computers may interpret the new year as 1900. The state news agency said the real potential for Millennium bug problems was in rival South Korea, demonstrated by its mistaken firing of a missile late last year. "The South Korean authorities are floating the rumour about the North's fictitious 'bug' in order to shift onto the North the blame for irretrievable accidents to be caused by the 'bug' in their military system," it said. "We are fully ready to teach anyone slandering our armed forces a bitter lesson. Repentance always comes late." KCNA added.

Another Russian military officer kidnapped in Chechnya

MOSCOW (AP) — Gunmen kidnapped a Russian sailor off a train passing through Chechnya Friday, a week after a Russian police general was abducted in the breakaway republic. The latest kidnapping will likely worsen already tense relations between Russia and Chechnya, which fought a bitter 1994-96 independence war. Chechnya has been left to its own affairs since then, and local warlords have made a booming business out of abducting Russians and foreigners for ransom. Russia kept mostly quiet on the kidnappings until the abduction of Maj. Gen. Gennady Shpigun, who was taken off his plane as it taxied down the runway at Grozny airport last Friday. The interior ministry threatened air strikes and beefed up its troops around the border. It temporarily halted flights to Chechnya's capital, Grozny, and began training civilians living near the Chechen border in handling firearms so they can defend themselves against possible attacks. Though officials have backed off earlier threats to wage a full-scale war, President Boris Yeltsin Thursday promised retaliatory measures in response to Shpigun's abduction. In the latest incident, Oleg Timoshenko, a warrant officer in Russia's navy, was kidnapped from a train bound for Tbilisi, Georgia when it stopped at a station in Chechnya. Gunmen in military fatigues entered the carriage, introduced themselves as Chechen police, and took Timoshenko away. A guard on the train told the ITAR-TASS news agency, Timoshenko had been on his way to his father's funeral in Tbilisi. ITAR-TASS said.

Uzbek bomb suspects arrested in Kyrgyzstan

TASHKENT (AFP) — Several suspects wanted in connection with a spate of bomb blasts targeting Uzbek President Islam Karimov last month have been arrested in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, officials said here Friday. Officials in the Uzbek prosecutor's office told AFP that a joint operation by Uzbek and Kyrgyz law and order forces had rounded up several people believed to have been involved in the six bomb blasts which shook Tashkent on Feb. 16. They did not specify exactly how many of the suspected terrorists had been arrested, but sources told AFP that the suspects were linked to the Wahabite sect of Islam. Karimov immediately pointed the finger at Islamic extremists after the Tashkent blasts, two of which rocked the government building where he had been due to address a cabinet meeting. He later said around 30 Islamic extremists had been rounded up in connection with the case but the search for the ringleaders has continued. According to official figures, 13 people were killed and 128 injured in the explosions.



Cambodian soldiers fill oil drums with Taiwanese toxic waste during preparations to remove the waste from the southern port of Sihanoukville. Taiwan's Formosa Plastics Corp agreed to remove the waste dumped near Sihanoukville late last year after protests and objections from the Cambodian government (Reuters photo)

Cambodia to be rid of Taiwan waste by end April

SIHANOUKVILLE, Cambodia (R) — Nearly 3,000 tonnes of hazardous waste dumped in southern Cambodia by a Taiwanese firm late last year will be removed from the country by the end of April, an adviser to the company said Friday.

More than 150 Cambodian soldiers, some clad in protective white overalls and most wearing face masks, began packing the mercury-laced waste into steel drums earlier this week.

"The agreement between Formosa Plastics and the government of Cambodia is to have this material off site within 60 days," Bill Ross, an environmental adviser to Taiwan's Formosa Plastics Corp, told Reuters.

"This material will be leaving here by the end of April to a safe disposal location in another country," Ross said.

Formosa Plastics is paying for the clean up.

Soldiers working at the site said they were being paid \$20 a day.

He declined to say where the waste was bound but a local official in Sihanoukville said it was being sent to the United States.

Some of the steel drums into which the waste was being packed bore labels identifying the importer as safety-keen (Westmorland) Inc., in California.

Ross said about three tonnes of top soil was also being removed from the dump site, in case it had been contaminated.

The discovery of the waste in December, dumped at an open site some 10 km from Sihanoukville port, sparked riots in which at least one person was killed. Several others died in accidents during a panicked exodus of some 10,000 people from the town.

Formosa Plastics initially

said the concrete-like rubble was safe for landfill disposal, but later acknowledged that some of it might slightly exceed safety standards.

Tests showed that much of the waste contained very high levels of mercury.

Environmental groups and human rights workers said at least two people died after exposure to the waste, although the causes of death were never confirmed.

Three Sihanoukville government officials have so far been charged in connection with the dumping.

Two human rights workers were arrested while monitoring the December protests and are still facing charges of robbery and damage to property. They have denied the charges and international human rights groups have called for the charges to be dropped.

'NATO enlargement marks end of divided Europe'

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The enlargement of NATO Friday to include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland will mark the end of European division, the alliance's secretary general Javier Solana said in statement.

The joining of the former Communist states marks "much more than the fourth and latest enlargement of the Atlantic alliance," Solana said. "It also signals the final overcoming of the division of Europe."

Solana, speaking ahead of a ceremony in the U.S. later Friday to welcome the three states to NATO, concluded: "This is not the end of the story. The current enlargement of NATO will not be the last."

Another nine countries — Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — are also pushing to join the alliance.

The foreign ministers from Warsaw, Prague and Budapest attended a ceremony Friday in Independence, Missouri.

Solana said the move demonstrated that NATO's "door is open to all those new democracies of central and eastern Europe which wish to be part of Euro-Atlantic institutions and are willing and able to shoulder the responsibilities as well as the benefits of membership."

NATO's expansion makes the West's common security "stronger than ever," U.S. President Bill Clinton said in an article in a Polish paper Friday, adding that he hoped the newcomers would pave the way for others.

"With Poland, along with Czech Republic and Hungary, now members of NATO, we can be certain

that our common security is stronger than ever," he said in the signed article in Poland's leading newspaper, Gazeta Wyborcza.

Solana praised the new members' effort to meet the membership requirements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), saying they had "every right to be proud of what they have achieved."

The first enlargement of the Western alliance into eastern Europe also represented "the triumph of justice over history," he said.

Eastern and central Europe had been too long

"separated by the tragedy of war and division from being part of the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies to which they rightly belong," Solana added.

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were invited to join NATO in July 1997, and their application has been officially ratified in the parliaments of the member countries since then.

They join in time for NATO's 50th birthday celebrations in Washington next month.

Their accession to NATO

will be marked at the alliance's headquarters in Mons, Belgium, Tuesday, when the three nations' flags will be raised in the presence of the countries' prime ministers.

Once they are full members, they will be able to take part in joint NATO-Russia meetings, from which they had previously been barred following opposition from Russia.

Moscow reaffirmed Friday its dim view of NATO's eastwards expansion and warned that Washington was drawing a line in the sand between

Russia and the West.

"Russia's view of NATO enlargement has not changed and remains negative," the foreign ministry said in a statement issued to coincide with the acceptance ceremony.

"Expansion of the North Atlantic alliance will not contribute to the strengthening of trust and stability in international relations, but on the contrary, can create new dividing lines," the statement said.

Earlier this week, Russian Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov called NATO's expansion "a sad event."

JOB OPPORTUNITY

A leading Jordanian telecommunications company is seeking to recruit qualified professionals in middle management positions (Section Heads and Senior Accountants), offering excellent compensation and benefit packages. Candidates must have the following qualifications:-

General Qualifications:-

- Ability to work under pressure and with minimum direct supervision.
- Ability to work in teams.
- First university degree with a minimum of 4 years program in the related fields, from a reputable university.
- CMA or CPA is a plus for some of the job openings.
- Proficiency in English language is a must.
- Excellent computer skills.
- Age not to exceed 34 years.

Job code (AQ 001):-

Specific requirements:-

- Accounting degree is a must
- Ability to follow and implement International Accounting Standards.
- Familiarity with international accounting packages.
- Minimum 8 years of experience, including 3 continuous years of experience in an audit firm.

Job code (AQ 002):-

Specific requirements:-

- Accounting degree is a must.
- Ability to follow and implement International Accounting Standards.
- Familiarity with international accounting packages.
- Minimum 5 years of experience, including 2 continuous years of experience in an audit firm.

Job code (SH 001):-

Specific requirements:-

- Accounting or Banking and Finance degree is a must.
- Minimum 8 years of experience, including 2 continuous years of experience in an audit firm or an applied experience in financial analysis.

Job code (SH 002):-

Specific requirements:-

- Economics or Accounting degree is a must.
- Minimum 8 years of experience, including 3 continuous years of experience in financial planning and/or in preparing feasibility studies.

Job code (FN 001):-

Specific requirements:-

- Accounting or Banking and Finance degree is a must.
- Experience in preparing process and workflow documentation and the ability to analyze work procedures and controls.
- Minimum 8 years of experience, including 3 continuous years of experience in implementing and applying international financial and accounting systems.

Job code (RD 001):-

Specific requirements:-

- Accounting or Banking and Finance degree is a must.
- A good knowledge of the insurance business, with speciality in general and accident insurance.
- Ability to prepare and negotiate insurance contracts.
- Ability to prepare statistical records of defaults and accidents.
- Ability to follow-up with insurance companies on claims.
- Minimum 5 years of experience in a local insurance company, including 3 continuous years of experience in general and accident insurance.

If you have the ability and the required qualifications, please send your C.V. stating the position you are applying for to the following mailing address:

Career Opportunity

A leading company in telecommunications in Jordan is seeking to recruit a Public Relations Manager who will be responsible for:-

- Communicating the corporate policies internally and externally.
- Drawing up a strategic plan for advertising campaigns.
- Maintaining good relations with the broadcast and printed media.
- Planning and managing regular "Customer Care" surveys, analyzing results and reports.
- Preparation and issuance of all relevant Company publications, reports and papers.
- Preparation of speeches for senior management.
- Preparation and supervision of conferences, exhibitions and social events.
- Maintaining good relationship with international telecoms organizations and entities (e.g. ITU)

Qualified candidates should have:-

- Dynamic, highly motivated and leading personality.
- 10-12 years experience in public relations, 3 years in management position.
- Excellent command of written and spoken English.
- Age below 45.

An excellent package is offered including attractive salary and other benefits.

Interested applicants should send their C.V.'s by mail to:-

ERNST & YOUNG

P. O. Box 1140, Amman 11118, Jordan.

(All applications will be handled with extra confidentiality)

ERNST & YOUNG

P. O. Box 1140, Amman 11118, Jordan

The deadline for receiving the C.V.'s is March 25, 1999.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.
جريدة أردنية مستقلة سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنيةChairman of the Board of Directors
Abdel Salam TarawnehVice Chairman & Director General
Mohammad AmadExecutive Editor
Abdullah HasanatResponsible Editor
Ella NasrallahEditorial and Advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jortimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Democracy in action

PARLIAMENT'S REJECTION of the resignation of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh from the Lower House ushers in a new era in parliamentary life in the country. Rawabdeh urged his fellow deputies to accept his resignation in keeping with the concept of the separation of powers. But now that 59 lawmakers decided to overrule the prime minister's resignation, a new situation has arisen.

The political rationale for the separation of three branches of government is as persuasive as ever. Still, the Constitution does not prohibit parliamentarians from holding cabinet positions. When there is a conflict between the law and policy, there is no choice but to yield to the law at least for the time being. Should we wish to press the point, we should first attempt to enact legislation to bar the "mixing" of the two responsibilities before we try to ban it altogether.

To be sure there are positive aspects to Rawabdeh maintaining his seat in the House. In most established parliamentary democracies, ministers come from parliament. This contemporary trend lies in the fact that in practically all such countries, especially in western Europe, governments are formed from the majority political party or a coalition of parties. The drawback in our case is the absence of well-established party politics on the basis of which cabinets can be formed. In Great Britain, for example, the Queen calls on the leader of the majority party to form the new government in the wake of national elections. We have not reached yet that level of political development but we are surely heading that way. Allowing Cabinet members including the prime minister to hold on to their seats in Parliament could be the beginning of a process leading to the emulation of well-established practices in other democracies.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour's Orel Rintawi commented on the visits of U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk to the region, saying that both officials are "influential Jews" in President Clinton's administration. The first has a plan to divide Iraq under a so-called confederation, while the second tours the Arab countries as "cover for" his colleague, Cohen carries offers of "hi-tech" weaponry that are worth tens of billions of dollars, while Indyk does nothing but promise that he will do his best to convince Israel to resume the deadlocked peace process after its elections, added Rintawi. Cohen will not meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a protest against the latter's "subornation," while Indyk, working "harmoniously" with Cohen, cancelled Lebanon from his Middle East tour as a protest against that country's official stand vis-a-vis Hizbollah, the writer quoted the Israeli press as reporting. Cohen seeks to exploit Arab fears of Iraq and Iran, while Indyk is looking to overcome Arab anger at Israeli policies opposing peace and causing more trouble and violence in Lebanon and Palestine, Rintawi said. Cohen is pushing the Arabs to take a final decision next summer concerning Iraq, while Indyk is trying to delay the declaration of an independent Palestinian state, he added. Two envoys with two missions: the first is to destroy Iraq and the Gulf economies, and the second is to postpone the Palestinian national programme and give more time to Israel to prepare its internal situation without pressure, Rintawi stated.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said that democratic practices make municipal elections as important as parliamentary or union elections. In fact, he added, a municipal election is the most comprehensive practice of democracy with respect to public participation, as it is closely connected to the idea of self-management. However, this idea is absent in general in Jordan, and therefore there is no real competition between such candidates, the writer noted. The scant interest the Kingdom's parties show in municipal elections is clear evidence of that, and it also shows how these parties, their programmes and actions are "unaware" of the importance of such elections, Saket argued. This situation, which has kept municipal elections tribal, has prevented the development of Jordan's democracy, he added. Saket said it was his belief that parties' limited role in parliamentary life, is a result of their weak participation in municipal elections, adding that most party members take part in the elections in the name of their tribes. All political and economic powers must help develop the country's democracy, and they must not forget that one of its main pillars is municipal elections, Saket concluded.

The quagmire of South Lebanon

THE HEAD of the Four Mothers Movement, Professor Linda Ben Zvi, wrote me that she is coming to Amman to rally Royal support with King Abdullah and Queen Noor to realise the objectives of her movement: to put an end to the endless procession of charred bodies of bright young men from both Lebanon and Israel fighting a futile senseless war.

But the sudden Israeli focus on exploring possibilities of withdrawing from southern Lebanon does not, at least at leadership level, come out of a sense to end an occupation of a neighbour's territory. It has come from the political imperatives ahead of general elections in May. As such, one can expect only empty rhetoric emanating from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Barak and others. Beyond that very little should be expected in terms of genuine concern.

That leaves the question of whether the Arab side, particularly Lebanon and Syria, will "respond" to this sudden Israeli desire to end its costly military occupation of South Lebanon. It will be simple naïveté on the part of Damascus and Beirut to believe that Netanyahu, the only Israeli leader at this point in time capable of ordering a withdrawal from South Lebanon, will suddenly sign on the dotted line and recall his army from Lebanon's territory in the next few weeks. Netanyahu might

want to do that to make himself popular with the Israeli voters just in time for the elections. But wanting and achieving political breakthroughs are two different things, particularly on the vibrant stage that characterises politics in the Jewish state.

As such, it will be senseless on the part of either Syria or Lebanon to respond to any Israeli proposal at this point in time. Very little could be hoped for in concrete terms, unless the dynamics of Israeli politics change in the aftermath of the May elections.

In this context, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, the clever politician that he is, has reaffirmed that there is no shift in his position, by declaring that Israel should realise that occupation and peace do not mix and that Syrian-Israeli peace depends totally on Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and South Lebanon. Indeed, it could even be expected that Damascus will use its proxy powers in Lebanon to humiliate Israel as much as possible in South Lebanon so that no Israeli politician would dare think of quitting South Lebanon in hopes of a separate peace accord with Beirut.

The Lebanese government is marching to the same tune by renewing its offer to deploy the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon to check guerrilla attacks against northern Israel in return for a total and complete, but unconditional Israeli withdrawal

from every inch of Lebanese territory. There is nothing new there for Israel since the offer has been on the table for several years now, but accepting it means negating all Israeli justifications for occupying South Lebanon since the Lebanese civil war ended.

That offer is made knowing very well that Israel is in no position to accept it. For the Israelis, it is imperative that their client militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), is allowed to get of scotfree for its treacherous collaboration as part of any withdrawal from Lebanon. The Lebanese government has told Israel it is strictly an internal Lebanese affair that would be dealt with in the Lebanese way.

However, some Israeli pundits are predicting that under the right circumstances Beirut could be persuaded into accepting a compromise agreement and signing a separate peace deal with Israel. There is a major flaw in the argument however, and that is the central role that the Israeli involvement in Lebanon plays in Syrian political considerations. Damascus knows very well that Israel can afford to continue its occupation of the Golan indefinitely and there is no compelling reason for any Israeli government to move towards returning the strategic plateau to Syria in return for a peace accord. Damascus has lived up to its 1973 armistice agreement with Israel by maintaining the Golan front as the quietest Arab-Israeli frontier. But

Jordanian Perspective



Dr. Musa Kellani

that is not the case with South Lebanon, where Syria finds the Israeli engagement a perfect target to hit in real terms. Coupled with the mounting Israeli casualties in South Lebanon are reports of escalating concern among Israeli soldiers and officers about serving in the occupied zone. Hizbollah and other resistance groups are ensuring that South Lebanon remains treacherous waters for any Israeli.

It is interesting how the U.S. is playing its game of mediation. American strategists know that the Syrian and Lebanese tracks of peace negotiations cannot be separated under the present given in the region's politics. The White House also knows that sending any signals of movement towards Israeli-Syrian peace on Israel's terms at this point will only strengthen Netanyahu ahead of the

elections. The U.S. administration is no exactly enthusiastic about Netanyahu getting re-elected, because it knows very well that the Likud leader could only further complicate the peace process by attaching more and more conditions on the implementation of the Oslo agreements and maintaining his hardline positions on peace with the Syrians. Both eventualities are unacceptable to Washington, particularly given growing Arab rejection of the U.S. stand vis-a-vis Iraq.

However, Washington cannot remain deaf to Israeli urgings to renew its efforts to "mediate" between Syria and the Jewish state. Such urgings are coming from Netanyahu who wants to tell his people that peace with Syria — meaning peace with Lebanon — could be achieved as a priority in the post-election stage if he is re-elected. Therefore, we find American politicians and "discreet" envoys going up and down between Syria and Israel. Washington has no choice but to somehow oblige Netanyahu by playing his game.

So what we see and hear today on the Syrian-Israeli front is nothing but a make-believe drama where all the players have their lines well rehearsed. The people who pay the price are the innocent civilians of South Lebanon and the young soldiers of the Israeli army.



Italian blunder symptom of West's inability to deal with Islam

By Michael Jansen

NTCOSIA — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's visits to Italy and the Vatican amounted to a very important breakthrough on the domestic plane for the reformists in Iran but raised false expectations of reconciliation in Iran, the Muslim World and the West.

The president's meetings with Italian political leaders and the Pope ended the self-imposed isolation of the Islamic Republic from Europe and the West which was a cornerstone of the foreign policy adopted by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. Coming on top of the sweeping reformist victory in last month's local elections in Iran, this opening to the West via Italy — soon to be followed by a similar opening through France — has strengthened Khatami vis-a-vis his still-isolationist conservative opponents, led by the Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But not as much as it should have done.

For President Khatami's trip, the first by an Iranian president to the West since Khomeini's Revolution, did not go as smoothly as expected: it coincided with the awarding by Turin University of a degree to Salman Rushdie, who was condemned to death ten years ago by Ayatollah Khomeini for his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which insults the Prophet Mohammad and slanders Islam. And as a result of the death sentence, relations between Iran and the West have been severely strained.

The English daily Iran News, normally sympathetic to Khatami, condemned this "honouring (of) an apostate" and called Rushdie's presence in Italy at the same time as the Iranian president "an unbelievable insult."

Of course, the anti-Khatami press portrayed the visit as a failure, particularly since the president's visit to Italy ended without the usual joint communiqué.

The fact that this "insult" was not intended makes it even more serious

than if it was. Because it was produced by sloppy planning and a lack of communication between the Italian presidency and the interior and foreign ministries. Turin University had apparently informed the ministry of interior many months ago that it would be hosting Rushdie at this time and applied for a visa for him. This ministry also assigned 150 police officers to protect the novelist. President Khatami's visit was also scheduled weeks ahead and well publicised so those involved in its planning should have been aware of the unfortunate coincidence.

Clearly the Italians focused on the possibility of disturbances from opponents of the clerical regime and forgot about other potential problems.

But this is typical of the West which has not yet accepted the fact that Muslims feel deeply angered and embittered by the adulation paid to the unspeakable, unreadable Rushdie. Unspeakable because, in his novel, he incorporated the worst slanders and insults heaped upon the Prophet and Islam by Christian "saints" (St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross), "scholars" and apologists from the tenth century till today. And unreadable because the narrative does not flow nor the story-line grip.

Unaware of the potential unfortunate impact of the coincidence of the Rushdie ceremonies with the visit of the Iranian president, the Italians reaped criticism from both sides. From Rushdie who criticised Rome's invitation to the representative of the government which has condemned him to death, and from Tehran for granting Rushdie a visa and an honour.

This small skirmish in the long-running civilisational war exposes once again the depth of misunderstanding of Islam which persists in the West.

President Khatami's appeal for a "dialogue of civilisations" fell on deaf ears. Deaf because the West is just not prepared to listen to the concerns of the Muslim world. Muslim expectations of a psychological breakthrough were

dashed.

The heavy, dark Roman atmosphere lightened somewhat when President Khatami met the Pope at the Vatican which understands how to deal with clerics in highly sensitive positions. Western analysts hailed this meeting as historic. A coming together of a highly placed representative of the Muslim World and the head of the largest Christian church. Which it was. But it cannot produce the dramatic reconciliation imagined by such commentators. On the political plane these analysts made much of Khatami's presidency of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Unfortunately, this does not carry much weight because the organisation itself rarely takes a strong lead in world affairs and because Khatami has been too busy at home to be an active executive.

On the Islamic plane, President Khatami, who represents the 10 per cent Shi'ite minority in the Muslim World, does not claim to speak for the 90 per cent Sunni majority. And particularly so since the Islamic Republic of Iran has neither reconciled with all of its neighbours (notably with the United Arab Emirates) nor erased suspicions raised by Khomeini's policy of "exporting the revolution" to other Muslim countries. Until Khatami is in a position to end Iranian provocations in the Gulf and prevent any adventures on the part of his own "revolutionaries," the Islamic Republic will not have the full confidence of the Sunni world.

The eternal problem is that the West still believes it can resolve the conflict of civilisations by fiat, in this case by receiving a Muslim leader who will wave his hands and make centuries of misunderstanding disappear. For this to happen, Westerners — starting with the Italians — will have to step into the shoes of Muslims and empathise. When Westerners achieve this, they will be in a position to receive outstanding Muslim leaders like Khatami without insulting them and dialogue may become possible.

Miss Palestine

Compiled by
Mohammad Ben Hussein

Columnists last week commented on the draft law against corruption, the election a Palestinian girl as "Miss Israel," and American policy in the region.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Junaidi blasted Israel for choosing a Palestinian girl to be "Miss Israel," saying that Israel will turn it into a propaganda coup. For instance, the Israeli media did not describe the girl as a Palestinian but as a 21-year-old Arab-Israeli. According to the writer, describing the girl as an Arab and not a Palestinian has many connotations: firstly Israel does not recognise the Palestinians as a people with an identity. Israel wants to portray

to the rest of the world that the girl is an Arab living in Israel, like any Arab who lives in Europe, the United States or elsewhere, said Junaidi.

Al Ra'i's Saleh Qallab criticised deputies and senators for exempting themselves from a draft law which forces officials to declare their financial assets in accordance with the anti-corruption law. Further criticisms have been raised, according to Qallab, over the move to almost double salaries, followed by the introduction of pensions for deputies and senators pension like other government employees.

The writer called on the deputies and senators to avoid raising question marks over their credibility: people do not distinguish between public employees and elected officials and thus, deputies, who were elected by people to protect national interests and question officials over their activities, should set an example fighting corruption, instead of introducing measures which can be seen as hypocritical, said Qallab.

Al Ra'i's Taher Odwan described American policy in the region as impotent and feeble with a limited vision for the future. President Clinton has been unable to force Israel to honour its commitments under the Wye River Accords between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), under the sponsorship of Washington itself, he said. The

American failure has a negative impact on the peace process throughout the entire region, said the writer. The United States took the responsibility of sponsoring peace in the region from the United Nations, argued the writer, but like United Nations' resolutions, Washington's decisions have become merely "ink on paper." On the Iraqi front, things are even worse, added the writer. The U.S. resorted to military power to end its dispute with the Iraqi regime, though it is common knowledge that force does not end dispute, said Odwan. The American envoy who came to the region in order to rally support for American policies against Iraq was rejected by almost every country he visited yet, nevertheless, he still threatens Iraq with more strikes. Anybody who has a brain in his head can see that American threats will never topple Saddam Hussein, said Odwan. The American policy is unable to provide the region with stability and security after its failure in the peace process and its failure with Iraq, said Odwan.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket questioned if resolutions taken in the Madrid peace conference have been implemented on the ground after six years. Many agreements were brokered between Israel and the Arab countries including the PLO and Jordan. Under the deal, Israel was supposed to establish full diplomatic ties with Arab countries, and the Arabs would end their boycott of Israel with a complete end to the state of war between the Palestinians and Israel, said the writer. But after six years, Israel is still occupying the West Bank, the Golan Heights and South Lebanon. And Israel is still insisting on its expansion policy, said Saket, a fact which can be seen in Israel's decision to freeze the peace talks with Syria and halt the implementation of the long-awaited Wye Plantation Accords. The only thing Israel did not freeze was settlement expansions in Arab land, said the writer. Israel continues its hostile policy to confiscate Arab land, opening roads and confiscating Arab houses in Jerusalem and Hebron as well as providing Jewish settlers with arms: settlers who have become the most influential political power in Israel.

New York's Palestinian state

By James Dao

HILLARY RODHAM Clinton said last year that a Palestinian state was "very important" to Middle East peace, and it seemed like a monumental political gaffe. Many Jewish groups reacted with alarm. And her husband's administration, which has never endorsed the idea, swiftly disowned her comments.

Now, after 10 months, Mrs. Clinton's words are back on the front pages of New York City's Jewish newspapers, thanks to the first lady's announcement that she is thinking about running for the Senate from the Empire State next year.

One of her potential Republican rivals, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, has stoked the controversy, asserting that Mrs. Clinton's remarks were "a very big mistake." And analysts are already predicting that the first lady's position on Palestinian statehood will hurt her among Jewish voters, about 12 per cent of the state's electorate.

But it's not necessarily so. A Palestinian state is not the same hot-button issue it was ten, or even five years ago, when endorsing the concept was akin in some peoples' minds to endorsing terrorism, many political analysts and

Jewish leaders say.

"The Palestinian state is no longer the taboo subject it once was," said Thomas Smerling, Washington director of the Israel Policy Forum, an American Jewish group that supports the peace process. "At a time when you have a Likud prime minister negotiating with the chairman of the PLO over the size of an eventual Palestinian entity, the idea of a Palestinian state no longer seems as alarming as it once did."

Many Jewish leaders say that since Israel and the PLO recognised each other's legitimacy in 1993, a growing number of Jews in America and Israel have come to accept that some sort of Palestinian state will be the likely outcome of a negotiated peace process.

Several polls of American Jews conducted over the past three years support that notion. A 1998 poll commissioned by the Middle East Quarterly found that 64 per cent of American Jews supported the statement, "The Palestinians should have their own country."

But even if most American Jews believe a Palestinian state is desirable, or inevitable, Mrs. Clinton's statement could still cause her grief in a New

York campaign. Many Jews were troubled not so much by the wording of Mrs. Clinton's remarks as by their timing. From Washington, she spoke up in the middle of sensitive peace talks between Israel and Palestinians. To many, weighing in at that moment seemed a crass attempt to push the talks towards a conclusion favouring the Palestinians.

"Many Jews viewed her statement as supporting a unilateral declaration of statehood by the Palestinians, or at least granting Arafat a licence to do it," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

But Foxman also acknowledged that "the overwhelming number of Jews would be supportive" of a Palestinian state if it were the result of a negotiated settlement. "It's Israel's peace," he said.

In a sign that she is serious about becoming a candidate, Mrs. Clinton has been trying to repair any damage from her remarks. Meeting with rabbis last week in Washington, she said she supported both the peace process and a Palestinian state. "They are not mutually exclusive of one another," her spokeswoman, Marsha Berry, said.

After the meeting, Rabbi Jay Kornfeld of New Jersey told the newspaper Jewish Week, "This may impress a lot of Jews in New York."

If supporting a Palestinian state is no longer the third rail of Jewish-American politics, what might Giuliani or other Republicans gain from keeping the issue alive?

A significant number of Jews continue to oppose a Palestinian state. But they tend to be conservatives who vote Republican anyway. It is more likely that Giuliani was using the Palestinian issue as a symbol for broader themes, political analysts said.

Raising questions about Mrs. Clinton's remarks is a way of raising doubts about her support for Israel, said Kieran Mahoney, a Republican consultant from New York. It also is another way of labelling her a liberal ideologue, said Ester Fuchs, a political science professor at Barnard College.

"Supporting a Palestinian state used to be the peacenik position, an extreme left-wing position," she said. "And that's what Giuliani has to do: Paint his opponent into a left-wing corner."

Giuliani says he has simply taken the same position as the president, who is very popular among Jews. But in help-



Hillary Clinton and Suha Arafat in Gaza last year (file photo)

ing to keep the issue alive, he risks a backlash, some analysts contend. Last year, Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato accused Charles E. Schumer, who is Jewish, of missing votes on important Jewish issues. D'Amato lost the race and saw his share of the Jewish vote decline from past elections.

"I'm not sure the mayor has the pulse of American Jewish opinion on this issue," said Seymour D. Reich, a past chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and a supporter of the peace process.

— New York Times

Jerusalem braces for Millennium mayhem

By Paul Holmes
Reuters

"O YE dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live," Joe Kuhn moved to Jerusalem nearly six years ago in the belief that God selected him to recite those words from the Old Testament book of Ezekiel when the time comes to raise the ancient Hebrew people from the dead.

Now with 2000 approaching, Kuhn, a 43-year-old American from Fort Bragg in North Carolina, believes their resurrection is close at hand and that with it will start a 1,000-year reign of peace when he will sit at God's side as a high priest.

Convinced of his calling — and of his sanity — Kuhn no longer leaves the confines of Jerusalem's walled Old City, fearful that he might miss his mission.

"That's why I came here, to open the graves of the Hebrew people," said Kuhn, who has got

by cleaning floors at the cheap hostel where he lives just off the Via Dolorosa, the purported Way of the Cross that Christ took to his crucifixion.

"It was kind of hard for me to accept at first...but I believe God chose me to do this," Kuhn told Reuters.

Upwards of three million foreign pilgrims are expected to flock to the Holy Land for the coming Millennium, the vast majority of them mainstream Christians marking the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus.

A minority, however, will arrive convinced that the end of the world is nigh and eager for "front row seats" at the Second Coming on the Mount of Olives.

The prospect that zealots with apocalyptic visions might use violence to try to hasten the final showdown has galvanised Israel's security services.

Mindful of the charged religious atmosphere in a city holy to Christians, Muslims and Jews, Israel has set up a special task force embracing members of the Shin Bet and Mossad intelligence

services to tackle any acts of fanaticism.

Their greatest fear is of attempts to destroy the Muslim shrines on Jerusalem's Temple Mount to make way for the building of a Jewish Third Temple as a prelude to the end of the world.

"We will take the most severe security measures ever taken in the state of Israel in the past 50 years to ensure that nothing we don't want to have happen occurs," Jerusalem's Israeli mayor, Ehud Olmert, told reporters last month.

"There will be an iron fist against any crazy cults that want to put the Middle East in flames just because of their ideas," he said.

In January, Israeli police traced 14 members of an American doomsday cult to two rented properties near Jerusalem and swiftly deported them on the grounds that they were plotting violence and mass suicide to mark the Millennium.

The 14, six of them children, were part of a larger group of followers of the Concerned Chris-

tians cult who disappeared from Denver, Colorado, several months previously.

Their leader, Monte Kim Miller, has prophesied that he will die in Jerusalem in 1999 and be resurrected three days later.

Miller remains at large.

Kol Ha'ir, an Israeli weekly newspaper, recently quoted police sources as saying Israel had identified some 400 foreign cult members who posed a danger, of whom a few dozen were already in the country.

Georgia, a sprightly 75-year-old from Colorado, does not plan to be around when they show up.

"It's like suicide," said Georgia, counselling the rush of pilgrims expected for the millennium to be anywhere but Jerusalem in 2000.

Georgia left Jerusalem in early February after a three-month stay near the Old City's Damascus Gate proclaiming the good news that the world would not end until 2020.

The bad news is that the next two decades are going to be hell.

"There's going to be an earthquake. There's going to be war and the Prophet Zechariah says that two thirds of the people right here will be cut off. This is a war zone," she said, standing by Damascus Gate.

"The first thing I noticed of the signs is the UFOs. The UFOs are

really a sign of the end time," said Georgia, referring to unidentified Flying Objects she sees in the sky.

Yair Bar-El, the Jerusalem district psychiatrist, is bracing for business as the Millennium approaches.

In 1982, Bar-El identified a disorder that afflicts a minority of pilgrims to the Holy City and called it the Jerusalem Syndrome.

Some sufferers arrive mentally disturbed and convinced they are biblical figures, others come with apocalyptic convictions.

A third type turns up perfectly sane yet, overwhelmed by the city's religious magnetism, somehow feels compelled to don white robes — usually their hotel bed sheets — and preach sermons.

Each year, around 150 tourists are treated for various manifestations of the syndrome at Jerusalem's Giv'at Shaul Mental Health Centre.

Bar-El recalls one man, a Canadian Jew, who believed himself to be Samson the Brave and tried to shift the huge stones in the Wall-

ing Wall, Judaism's most sacred site.

A second man he remembers was found by Palestinian police wandering through the desert wearing an animal skin. Israeli authorities were alerted and quickly identified him as another John the Baptist.

Unless they resort to violence, such people are usually treated for a few days and then sent home.

"It is not against the law for a person to feel he is King Solomon or to take a few jars of water and try to turn it into wine," said Victor Wadachkar, the deputy head of a special Israeli police unit that deals with Jerusalem's tourists.

Bar-El estimates that city psychiatrists will have to treat some 600 to 800 pilgrims over the Millennium period, which stretches roughly from Easter 1999 to Easter 2001.

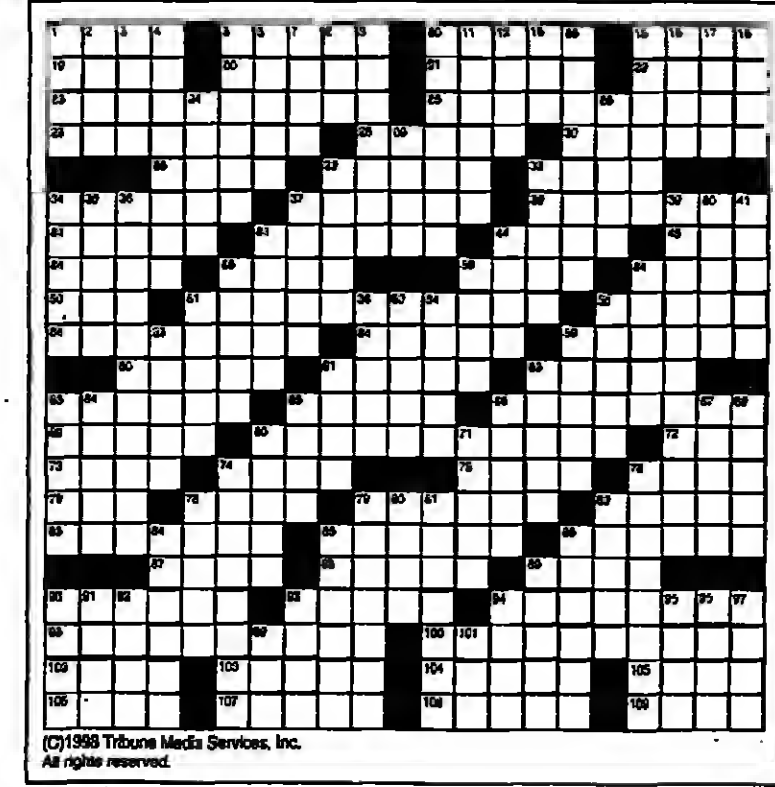
He is concerned that the health services may be overwhelmed.

"If all the people are crazy at the same time, we will have big problems," Bar-El said.

The Saturday Crossword

A REMEMBRANCE OF TOYS PAST
By Edgar Fontaine, Dighton, Massachusetts

- ACROSS
- 1 Injury
 - 5 Support crew
 - 10 Coral colonies
 - 15 Baby's word
 - 19 Toward shelter
 - 20 "As You Like It" role
 - 21 "Borsalino" star
 - 22 Orin shaped
 - 23 Gift from Santa
 - 25 Gift from Santa
 - 26 Gift from Santa
 - 27 West Indies
 - 28 Film snippets
 - 30 More than enough
 - 31 Stock-car racer
 - 32 Yacht
 - 33 Mineral springs
 - 34 Hindu souls
 - 37 Nose-maker
 - 38 Fitcher's opponents
 - 42 Greg Norman's sobriquet
 - 43 Alvin Lincoln in Illinois' star
 - 44 Vocal inflection
 - 45 Outdo
 - 46 Foster film, "Little Man"
 - 47 Squirrel away
 - 48 Unworn hairstyle
 - 49 Twice OJ
 - 50 Business letter
 - 51 Gift from Santa
 - 52 Writer/singer
 - 53 Leonard
 - 54 Stiffen again
 - 55 Perfume from petals
 - 56 Wide stretches in rivers
 - 60 Construct
 - 61 Broad-casting
 - 62 Reprise
 - 63 Fiery or jaunty
 - 65 Deep draft of liquor
 - 66 Penances
 - 69 Second largest state
 - 70 Gift from Santa
 - 71 Tarzan on TV
 - 72 Contrast of speed
 - 73 Poles run
 - 74 Geological time periods
 - 75 Knock for a loop
 - 76 What the style of
 - 77 Societal young women, briefly
 - 79 Acme
 - 82 Right-hand page
- DOWN
- 2 Treachery
 - 3 Urban distance
 - 4 Units
 - 6 Soaked oneself
 - 7 Andes autocar
 - 8 Fugard play, "A Lesson from"
 - 9 Oodles
 - 10 Seem
 - 11 Brincasso
 - 12 Imports
 - 13 Gift from Santa
 - 14 Gift from Santa
 - 15 Gift from Santa
 - 16 Gift from Santa
 - 17 Shop
 - 18 Shattering heiser
 - 19 Different
 - 20 Scatter Fitzgerald
 - 21 Sila light
 - 22 Overstuffed
 - 23 Unit of electricity
 - 24 Sarcasm
 - 25 Sarcasm
 - 26 Sarcasm
 - 27 Sarcasm
 - 28 Sarcasm
 - 29 Sarcasm
 - 30 Sarcasm
 - 31 Sarcasm
 - 32 Sarcasm
 - 33 Sarcasm
 - 34 Sarcasm
 - 35 Sarcasm
 - 36 Sarcasm
 - 37 Sarcasm
 - 38 Sarcasm
 - 39 Sarcasm
 - 40 Sarcasm
 - 41 Sarcasm
 - 42 Sarcasm
 - 43 Sarcasm
 - 44 Sarcasm
 - 45 Sarcasm
 - 46 Sarcasm
 - 47 Sarcasm
 - 48 Sarcasm
 - 49 Sarcasm
 - 50 Sarcasm
 - 51 Sarcasm
 - 52 Sarcasm
 - 53 Sarcasm
 - 54 Sarcasm
 - 55 Sarcasm
 - 56 Sarcasm
 - 57 Sarcasm
 - 58 Sarcasm
 - 59 Sarcasm
 - 60 Sarcasm
 - 61 Sarcasm
 - 62 Sarcasm
 - 63 Sarcasm
 - 64 Sarcasm
 - 65 Sarcasm
 - 66 Sarcasm
 - 67 Sarcasm
 - 68 Sarcasm
 - 69 Sarcasm
 - 70 Sarcasm
 - 71 Sarcasm
 - 72 Sarcasm
 - 73 Sarcasm
 - 74 Sarcasm
 - 75 Sarcasm
 - 76 Sarcasm
 - 77 Sarcasm
 - 78 Sarcasm
 - 79 Sarcasm
 - 80 Sarcasm
 - 81 Sarcasm
 - 82 Sarcasm
 - 83 Sarcasm
 - 84 Sarcasm
 - 85 Sarcasm
 - 86 Sarcasm
 - 87 Sarcasm
 - 88 Sarcasm
 - 89 Sarcasm
 - 90 Sarcasm
 - 91 Sarcasm
 - 92 Sarcasm
 - 93 Sarcasm
 - 94 Sarcasm
 - 95 Sarcasm
 - 96 Sarcasm
 - 97 Sarcasm
 - 98 Sarcasm
 - 99 Sarcasm
 - 100 Sarcasm
 - 101 Sarcasm
 - 102 Sarcasm
 - 103 Sarcasm
 - 104 Sarcasm
 - 105 Sarcasm
 - 106 Sarcasm
 - 107 Sarcasm
 - 108 Sarcasm
 - 109 Sarcasm
 - 110 Sarcasm
 - 111 Sarcasm
 - 112 Sarcasm
 - 113 Sarcasm
 - 114 Sarcasm
 - 115 Sarcasm
 - 116 Sarcasm
 - 117 Sarcasm
 - 118 Sarcasm
 - 119 Sarcasm
 - 120 Sarcasm



Turkey's Islamic style capitalism

By Pelin Turgut
Reuters

DEEP IN Turkey's Anatolian heartland in the drab city of Konya, famed for its whirling dervishes, there spins a 20th century economic success story with a difference — capitalism, Islamic style.

Several companies there, built innovatively on the small savings of thousands of Turkish workers abroad, have risen to become leading industry holdings in only 10 years.

But their prosperity has driven a stake through Turkish society. Critics accuse them of unbridled greed, even dubious business practices in raking in funds from Turks working overseas, especially in Germany.

Though they may not sport Islamic-style heavy beards, the businessmen — and they are invariably men — running them make few bones about their strong religious ties.

The Koran often has pride of place in their offices, as do books on Islamic ethics. They try to transact business in line with Islamic teaching, which forbids the payment of interest on loans, and avoid banks for the same reason.

Alcohol is not sold in their shops and their factories include miniature prayer halls.

But, they say, piety is no crime and need not be bad business.

Unofficial estimates are that some \$5 billion has entered Turkey via these so-called "green companies" in the cities of Konya, Kayseri and Gaziantep.

Company couriers have been detained with suitcases of hard currency at airports, suggesting that a large proportion of some of the firms' wealth is unregistered.

Outside observers find Islamic ethics have contributed to their dynamism. Workers have a stronger sense of company loyalty, and their managers, often recruited from family-dominated top Istanbul conglomerates, find it liberating.

"If the two life-systems (the divine and the human) are in harmony, then people feel at peace. If not, then you get discomfort," explained Husein Bayram, the burly and bluntly spoken chairman of Kombassan Holding.

Kombassan was founded by Bayram, a former chemistry teacher, a decade ago with the savings of Turkish workers in Germany. It now has some 40,000 shareholders, none of whom can own more than one per cent of the firm.

It recently acquired U.S. clothing retailer Hilti or Miss for an undisclosed amount. Its

exports from Turkey total some \$300 million annually, Bayram said.

The success of the "Anatolian Lions," as they have been dubbed, has divided Turkish society as the officially secular country wrestles with its dominant Muslim identity.

Turkey's establishment has made its position clear.

It launched a multi-pronged assault on the companies, stepped up in the aftermath of a landmark military decree two years ago to crack down on Islamic activism.

The Turkish army and many commentators fear such firms fund the rising tide of political Islam, particularly the Islamist Virtue Party.

Islamic firms were prohibited from entering defence tenders.

A long-awaited process of allocating new television channel frequencies was suspended on fears that such firms would be successful bidders.

Separately, the Turkish Capital Markets Board (SPK) has filed lawsuits against six Islamic companies who are accused of breaching the law on the public issue of securities.

Under Turkish commercial law, companies with more than 100 shareholders are listed on the Istanbul stock exchange to ensure regulation and account transparency. In the absence of audited accounts, the SPK says, shareholders have no protection against fraud.

But many Islamic firms say that unlike bourse-listed firms, they are already fully publicly owned. There are insufficient controls against manipulation on the young exchange, they say.

"Our companies have a different structure, they have played a big role in being able to bring back savings from abroad, especially in Germany, to Turkey," said Ahmet Akman, a board member of Konya-based Itifak Holding.

Itifak is made up of 17 companies, has 20,000 partners and employs some 2,500 people. "This is why we are saying regulate this sector, establish some kind of legal framework," he said.

Itifak and Kombassan are two of the older companies. Their success has spawned many copycats, and in the absence of clear regulation, experts say it is hard to say which are financially sound.

"How they get this kind of money together in such a short time is deeply suspicious," said columnist Hikmet Cetinkaya.

Turkish workers abroad have reported

being promised exorbitant 20-30 per cent profit sharing returns on their investments. Critics have charged that the improbably high rates of return indicate illegal activity or capitalising on high Turkish lira bond yields. They say that in the absence of real investment, the system could collapse as inflation falls.

"Danger is near. The economy is slowing down, inflation is falling and the difference (between depreciation and high inflation) is closing," wrote columnist Enis Berberoğlu.

They have also said that such companies play on religious sentiment and the gullibility of workers abroad or local villagers.

"We too suffer from these sprouting companies. People tell us they are being offered 40 per cent returns on a Mark basis, this is entirely unfair competition," said Itifak's Akman.

Economist Osman Altug, an expert in money laundering research, believes that generalising is unfair. "Of course there will be one or two rotten apples, but you can't talk about all these companies in these terms," he said.

The main problem, according to Altug, is that Turkey's capital market laws are in need of urgent revision.

"Turkey must make the transition from being an economy where all instruments are made out to the bearer, to one where they are all clearly registered in people's names," he said.

Most Islamic firms register ownership directly in the person's name.

Altug said the SPK decision to refuse several Islamic companies permission to raise their capital for over a year created unfair competition.

Newspapers have reported that the SPK was to demand that companies be listed on the stock exchange in return for being allowed to raise their capital. This would allow SPK officials to exercise regulatory powers.

Politics aside, many believe rivalry between the Istanbul "old boys club" of established business and the booming Anatolian industry is also at the heart of recent legal investigations and many press reports.

Turkey's media is dominated by a few companies which have close commercial connections.

"Of course, the large industrial groups own the television stations and newspapers, so they have greater power to accuse," said Altug.

DAMASCUS (R) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Thursday called for more measures to stimulate domestic and foreign investment.

He told parliament after taking the oath for a fifth seven-year term that the 1991 investment law should be amended to attract more Syrian, Arab and foreign investors.

Assad gave no details but investors have called previously for the easing of hard currency rules and amendment of regulations that impose prison sentences of up to 25 years for illegal deals.

Businessmen have also asked for the easing of legal and administrative procedures for setting up investment projects, and for the establishment of a stock exchange to handle the dozens of big compa-

nies set up during the last few years.

"During the coming period we should achieve balance in the national economy through work to increase production and expand the base of development and investment," Assad stressed.

"We should reconsider the investment law (number 10) to remove any obstacles that hinder the best utilisation of the law and the attraction of new investment," Assad said.

The law gives big incentives to the private sector including up to seven-years tax-free operation. It has attracted investments totalling \$8.5 billion but investors complain about currency regulations and the absence of a free market in Syrian pounds.

The U.S. dollar trades at 46 pounds at local banks

but at between 50 and 52 pounds on the black market.

Assad said reforms should also cover the banking system. All Syrian banks are owned and run by the government.

The European Union started recently to help modernise the banking system, especially the two main banks — the Central Bank and the Commercial Bank.

Financial sources said it was still too early to talk about the privatisation of the banking system in Syria. Most banking operations for Syrian businessmen are at present handled by banks in neighbouring Lebanon.

Assad also called for easing controls imposed on companies in the public sector to make them more active and profitable.

THE HAGUE (R) — Key oil powers ended emergency talks on Friday saying they secured a unanimous agreement to cut oil supply by over two million barrels per day (bpd) and predicting prices would move up significantly.

The oil minister of oil powerhouse Saudi Arabia called it "an excellent agreement" which would erase the world's excess crude oil stocks by the end of June and raise prices to between \$17 and \$19 a barrel.

World oil markets reacted instantly to news of the deal, clinched after two days of talks in The Hague and effectively removing some six per cent of global supply of 75 million bpd.

Benchmark Brent crude oil jumped to more than \$13 a barrel, its highest in nearly five months, before easing back on profit-taking.

"They have agreed to...an output cut of over two million barrels per day over and above the previous (1998) commitments," said a joint statement, read out by Algerian Oil Minister Youssef Yousfi, the current OPEC president.

He said this would take total cuts agreed by OPEC and non-OPEC producers since last year, when prices crashed to a 25-year low, to more than five million bpd.

Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali Al Naimi told reporters the deal between OPEC

members Saudi Arabia, Iran, Algeria and Venezuela, and non-OPEC Mexico — would take effect from April 1.

"Everybody has said enough is enough and we need higher prices. The governments have said the future of the oil industry is at risk," said a Saudi source.

"Saudi Arabia's decision to go below eight million barrels per day in itself is very significant. It shows that like other countries, we want higher oil prices," he added.

Saudi Arabia is expected to shoulder up to a quarter of the overall cuts, taking its production to below its long cherished 8.0 million bpd for the first time since 1990, when Iraq's invasion of Kuwait led to a ban on its oil exports.

A Gulf source said all individual allocations for the 10 OPEC members — excluding Iraq — had been agreed and an OPEC meeting in Vienna in March was expected only to ratify the levels. Numbers were left vague in the communiqué because protocol demanded that all members be present.

While analysts broadly welcomed the new pact, some said its success or failure would depend in large part on the manner in which individual cuts would be distributed. Yousefi told the official

Algerian news agency APS the agreement was likely to last for one year from April 1.

Naimi said the agreement was unanimous, "There is no disagreement on the individual country cuts. No disagreement whatsoever."

His remarks implied that Venezuela, which earlier said it opposed further cuts, backed the deal. Mexico, the non-OPEC producer who vies with Venezuela and Saudi Arabia for the lucrative U.S. market, said it would cut from exports as it had done previously.

Yousfi said the cuts were agreed by 10 members of OPEC — sanctions-bound Iraq is excluded from the cuts — plus Mexico and Oman. He said he was consulting other non-OPEC producers including Russia and Norway, which had expressed willingness to participate.

Norway's Oil and Energy Minister Marit Arnstad will consult parliament about possible new cuts in oil output, a spokeswoman said after news of The Hague deal.

Another question mark was how producers would share out a 300,000 bpd cut to resolve a dispute with Iran over its baseline, which Tehran says was overestimated when cuts were agreed last year.

Riyadh's compromise over the issue of Iran's quota followed high-level talks between Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi's and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah earlier this month.

Exchange Rates		Thursday, 11-03-98		ACCESS 4646888			
COUNTRY	UNIT	LAST	BAHRAIN	UNIT	UNIT	UNIT	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DINEAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.9387	0.1945	2.3092 0.2077 0.7080
SAUDI RIAL	5.2975	1.0000	1.0208	9.9472	9.7406	1.0307	12.2329 1.2005 3.7506
EGYPTIAN POUND	5.1693	0.8799	1.0000	8.7441	9.5416	1.0091	11.9830 1.0781 3.8146
IRANIAN RIAL	0.1005	0.1025	0.1026	1.0000	0.9792	0.1036	1.2298 1.0708 0.3571
AFGHANI DINEAR	0.2549	0.1027	0.1048	1.0122	1.0000	0.1058	1.2959 0.3000 0.3610
LIBAN LIRA	5.1427	0.7008	0.8910	8.8565	9.4569	1.0000	11.8751 0.9694 0.0693
LIBAN POUND	0.4031	0.0117	0.0635	0.8132	0.7963	0.0842	0.8569 0.0900 0.3066
GUINNY DINEAR	4.8136	0.9087	0.9738	8.0396	8.9508	0.9899	11.1155 1.0000 0.4080
LIBAN LIRA	21.2268	0.4074	0.4909	38.6627	39.0739	1.1290	48.0215 4.102 15.0000
ISRAELI DOLLAR	1.4124	2.0866	0.2722	2.4592	2.5671	0.2746	3.2616 0.2934 1.0000
BRITISH STERLING	0.8987	0.1942	0.1978	1.9331	1.9692	0.1981	2.0084 1.8007 0.5198
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	0.8535	0.1942	0.4895	4.7604	4.6515	0.4930	5.8542 0.5267 1.7949
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	2.0709	0.3008	0.3991	3.6666	3.6078	0.4027	4.7821 0.2623 0.6195
FRANCA FRANCO	6.5023	1.6050	1.6384	15.8660	15.6333	1.6533	19.6333 1.6466 0.7195
INDIAN RUPEE	1.7061	0.3219	0.3286	3.2017	3.3312	0.3318	3.9374 0.3542 1.2022
INDIAN RUPEE	2.6584	0.5392	0.5044	5.3635	5.2520	0.5368	6.5959 0.5934 2.0273
HOLLAND GILDER	11.4845	2.1679	2.2131	24.1167	24.1167	2.3332	26.5199 2.3859 8.7310
HOLLAND KRONA	26.0799	7.7377	7.8885	47.7272	46.1480	4.8803	57.9560 5.2140 17.7893
ALY LIRA	33.9455	9.6707	10.0765	98.1955	96.1480	10.1878	120.7469 10.6630 37.0210
HOLLAND FRANC	2.2261	0.4292	0.4290	4.1789	4.0931	0.4329	5.1404 0.4526 1.5760
AUSTRIAN SCHILLING	1.6175	0.7667	0.8031	7.8255	7.6526	0.8104	8.6236 0.8555 0.9298
SPAIN PESSERA	0.7483	0.1413	0.1442	1.4081	1.3759	0.1495	1.7280 1.1952 1.2837
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.8352	3.3667	3.4369	33.4893	32.7939	3.4681	39.7923 3.4475 1.8520
INDONESIA RUPIAH	2.1540	0.4081	0.4151	4.0443	4.0443	0.4186	4.9739 0.2693 0.8719
INDONESIA RUPIAH	2.1540	0.4081	0.4151	4.0443	4.0443	0.4186	4.9739 0.2693 0.8719

COUNTRY	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
AFRICAN	1.0000	1.6240	0.9571	0.6620	0.1681	0.2384	0.4845	5.6277	1.0895			
AFRICAN METER	0.1519	0.0000	0.2431	0.4300	0.1023	0.5101	0.3045	3.4553	0.8729			
BERNARD METER	1.7948	2.9148	1.0000	1.2342	0.2882	1.4698	0.6876	10.1011	1.9559			
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.4682	2.3811	0.8189	1.0000	0.2436	1.2145	0.7250	8.2513	1.5974			
FRANCE FRANC	0.6196	0.9758	3.3537	4.1056	1.0000	1.9964	2.9766	33.6761	6.5581			
AFRICA YEM	120.7200	196.0493	67.2572	82.3393	20.0545	1.0000	58.8944	67.7947	131.5244			
AFRICA YEM	2.0223	3.2842	1.1267	1.3738	0.3360	1.9732	1.0000	11.3629	2.8553			
AFRICA YEM	8.1310	13.2647	4.5301	5.9451	1.9058	6.7754	0.9207	45.7587	8.0087			
AFRICA YEM	17.7653	26.5053	8.9899	12.1193	2.9519	17.7194	8.7867	1.0000	10.3581			
AFRICA YEM	37.0210	60.1221	20.6257	25.2495	6.1501	30.6966	18.7064	70.3425	40.3460			
AFRICA YEM	1.5700	2.5995	0.6781	1.0749	0.2618	1.3055	0.7793	5.6895	1.7171			
AFRICA YEM	2.9506	4.7616	1.6438	2.0124	0.5202	2.4442	1.4580	10.5820	32.467			
AFRICA YEM	0.5268	0.8604	0.2952	0.3613	0.0680	0.4388	0.2620	2.9815	0.5772			
AFRICA YEM	12.6273	20.5057	7.0351	8.8123	2.0977	17.4040	6.2440	77.0629	13.7574			
AFRICA YEM	1.5250	2.4706	0.8496	1.0401	0.2533	1.2883	0.7541	5.8552	1.6615			
AFRICA YEM	0.9179	1.4936	0.5114	0.6260	0.1525	0.7903	0.4538	1.1844	1.0000			

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR				
CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN				
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISTAKES				
DEPOSIT INTEREST PRICES		CBJA		
CURRENCY	1 M	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR
US DOLLAR	4.5600	4.6500	4.7500	5.0300
BRITAIN STERLING	5.3500	5.5000	5.5800	5.6800
FRANCE MARK	3.0400	3.1600	3.2400	3.2900
GERMANY MARK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
NETHERLANDS GUILDER	1.1600	1.1600	1.2000	1.3400
ITALY LIRA*	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
JAPAN YEN*	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

WORLD STOCK MARKETS					PRECIOUS METALS		
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE			
FRANKFURT	DAX	4721.41	4758.48	-37.05	METAL	ASK	BID
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10749.01	10632.96	216.05	GOLD	293.10	293.50
LONDON	FTSE 100	8431.50	8237.70	3.88	SILVER	5.57	5.50
NEW YORK	DJINDX	3772.48	3693.79	78.69	PLATINUM	968.50	370.50
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	806.48	802.93	3.55			
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	718.14	711.45	3.68			
NEW YORK	S-P 500	1286.64	1279.64	7.00			
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	15952.14	15480.00	221.14			
	3-MONTH	4.30%	4.10%	0.20%			
			1198.00	2.11			

The Jury of assignment of the international award of tourism "Golden Helm" recognised four Jordanian tourist experts. These fine tourist professionals have been officially awarded this prestigious acknowledgement. They received the "Golden Helm" during an official ceremony and in an international congress in the context of tourism held this year at Milan, Italy in February 1999.

- **Zaki Abdullahiat, manager of Kuwait Airways in Jordan, who also was elected as vice-president of the international association "Golden Helmsmen of Tourism."**
- **Samir Joudeh, director of marketing and sales of Saudia Airlines in Jordan.**
- **Usama Faraj, manager of Royal Jordanian in Italy.**
- **Awali Kavar, general manager of Petra Tours in Jordan.**

The Golden Helim Award is assigned to those qualified for having contributed to the development of international tourism with competence, dedication, and professionalism. The international association "Golden Helmsmen of Tourism" was founded in 1974 by international experts including the Jordanian Falk Bisharat. Jordan branch was founded in 1996, HM King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein is the honorary president, and Nader Dahabi is the president of the board, and Saoud Sawalha is the vice-president. Membership include a selection of travel and tourism personnel, hotels, public relations and publications.

[illegible]

members: abbr.

36 Sucklet

38 Fireside yarn

40 Newsman

42 Donaldson

43 Bleamish

45 Breaks off

49 Grand ____ Oproy

50 Switched

52 Fill an empty
flut

53 Go-between's
charge

56 Horner-hitter

58 Ripps

59 Sign of healing

60 Jim Bakker's
org.

61 Contains in a
box

64 Very self-
centered

68 Those on a
quest

67 Hedgepodge

68 Wright and
Brewer

69 Promised

1 Down

1 More forbidding

20

By Willy A. Wiseman
New York, NY

3 Phases

4 Quilter's
gathering

5 Dullard

6 Still breathing

7 Milky Way, e.g.

8 brother

9 Brian, formerly
of Rocky Music

10 Popular read

11 Native Alaskan

12 Scorekeeper

13 Add more
pizzazz

14 Diggs mors

15 Buzz off

16 Fretful

16 Grassie novel,
"Travel with
My ____"

27 Parts of eyes

29 Evaluates
again

33 Craps shooter

37 Statutees

39 12/24 and
12/51

40 Meet out of
season

41 One to whom
property is
transferred

42 Stalker

44 Umpe's cohorts

46 Marrying in
hurry

47 Put a revival
flout on

51 Leave a
bivouac

54 Male duck

55 Artists' stand

59 Tree stump

62 Free of
history

63 Break letters

65 Womanizer

SPEED TRAILA SLOB
ATTN REBEL TEAM
PITN LOBST TALK
THESUNALORISES
ERIN OPENS
CAJON SEERS
OLES ESTATE DID
LATERBETHEMAYDAY
ASS ENAMEL RAGE
FOAME PRYOR
ENNUT SARA
MOONLIGHTSONATA
MOLD SLEEK TRAM
ANTE LEAVE LENO
SEED ENDEO YAKKS

©1989 Tribune Media Services, Inc.
All rights reserved.

ASK YOUR DOG TO COME OUT, AND ROMP IN THE SNOW..

TO "ROMP" MEANS TO PLAY OR FROLIC IN A BOISTEROUS, LIVELY WAY..

HE SAID "NO." "NO" MEANS TO DENY OR REFUSE, OR DISAGREE..

I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS!

R. CRUMB

THE YAKS
 STORY BY SIMON STÅLENHAG INTERNATIONAL
 AND CREATOR SYMONHAG.NC

YAK! YAK! YAK!

FLO COULD USE ONE OF THEM

I CAN'T SEE FLO WITH A MOBILE PHONE

YAK! YAK! YAK!

I MEANT AN IDIOT WITH MONEY

IN JUST THINGS OLD WOMEN CAN BUILDING PLACE FOR AMBLE! ITS NICE WORK!

THIS JOB GETS YOU OUT IN THE FRESH AIR AND SUNLIGHT! ITS HEALTHY FOR YOU!

BUT A SAME WOMEN HAS A JOB TO DO TOO! JUST A MINUTE, SIR, I'LL HAVE TO INSPECT THAT CATCH OF YOURS!

VEN, ITS A LITTLE ITS NOT UNDERSEE! YOU MAN KEEP IT!

DICK TRACY

DICK TRACY

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DESOU

©1995 Treasury Media Services, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

LECEX

GOUTIN

LALCOW

Answer:

TOOTH
PYLON
JAUNTY
CORPSE

(Answers tomorrow)

by Henri Arnold and Mike Aronson

Perfect fit

A natural for the job

YOU MIGHT SAY THE FASHION MODEL WAS THIS TO HIS WORK

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by this above cartoon.

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Amra Forum
Hotel
At 6th Circle
Tel.: 5510001
Shehrazad Restaurant
Great View - Overlooking Amman
Enjoy outstanding Mezza and live music.
your Friendly Host

Moya marches on as Rios joins exodus of seeds

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Spain's Carlos Moya stayed on course to unseat Pete Sampras as the World No. 1 Thursday, but defending champion Marcelo Rios joined the exodus of seeded players from the Champions Cup.

Moya, the fourth seed who could leap from fourth to first in the world if he reaches the final of the 2.45 million-dollar tournament, moved into the quarter-finals with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Belgian Xavier Malisse.

The Spaniard's bid for No. 1 apparently left fans here as cold as the chilly desert night.

Moya attributed his slow start against Malisse to nerves, exacerbated by the flat atmosphere on Stadium Court.

"I had to relax," he said. "Also it was a bit cold. The environment was not great. There were not many people out there."

"But then I started to warm up, started to play better and better. My forehand worked really well. I put a lot of pressure on him. I moved him very well."

He admitted that the possibility of reaching the summit of the rankings was on his mind.

"It's always coming to my mind, even when I don't want it to," he said. "But I think I would be happy if every day I had this feeling, that if I win two matches I'm number one. That means I'm really close."

In the quarter-finals he'll face Slovakian Karol Kucera, who posted a 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 victory over German Nicolas Pietrangeli. Kiefer had ousted fifth-seeded Australian Pat Rafter, another player with No. 1 aspirations, in the second round of the first Super Nine event of the year.

U.S. veteran Todd Martin humped former world No. 1 Rios, the sixth seed, 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 to reach the quarters. Rios wasn't too disappointed, given he has been sidelined since January with a back injury.

"I didn't do anything spectacular, and I missed too much," Rios said. "I think that's the thing, that I have not been playing in a long time. My back was a little bit tired, but no pain."



Chilean player Marcelo Rios returns a backhand against Todd Martin from the U.S. at the Champions Cup play in Indian Wells, California (AFP photo)



Mark Philippoussis from Australia eyes the ball before returning a backhand against Marat Safin from Russia at the Champions Cup play in Indian Wells, California. Philippoussis won 6-4, 6-3 (AFP photo)

"I don't think the tennis probably could have won was great," Martin said. "He the first set easier than he

did. In the second set I bung in there and got enough balls back to where I gave him an opportunity to miss a few. My impression was that he didn't enjoy having to play a longer point."

Martin advanced to a meeting with Australian Mark Philippoussis, a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Russian Marat Safin.

Philippoussis, who ended third-ranked Spaniard Alex Corretja's challenge for No. 1 in the second round, served just four aces to Safin's nine, but he put 69 per cent of his first serves in play.

"I was trying to ace him," Philippoussis said. "But he's a big guy with a long reach. I had a lot of unreturnable serves. I don't really care if I don't serve any aces. As long as I win the match I'm happy."

Seventh-seeded Tim Henman advanced to the last eight with a 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 victory over British Davis Cup teammate Greg Rusedski, and eighth-seeded Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands advanced with a 6-4, 6-4 win over compatriot Jan Siemerink.

Henman next meets U.S. qualifier Chris Woodruff, who beat Felix Mantilla 7-5, 7-5. Mantilla, ranked 20th in the world, stunned Sampras in the second round on Wednesday night but couldn't maintain his momentum against the 550th-ranked player in the world.

Krajicek, winner of the ATP Tour event in London last month, will face former French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil, who followed up his second-round win over world No. 2 Yevgeny Kafelnikov with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Sjeng Schalken.



German tennis player Steffi Graf returns a forehand at the Evert Cup in Indian Wells, California (AFP photo)

Graf rallies to reach Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Steffi Graf hatted past Chanda Rubin to reach the final of the Evert Cup Thursday, but it takes more than a scrappy victory to please the former World No. 1.

"I've always said, the most important thing is to play well," Graf said after coming from behind in both the second and third sets to win 2-6, 6-4, 6-2. "I didn't do that today, so I'm not happy about it."

Graf, at No. 5 the highest seeded player left in the draw, had dropped just six games in three matches before she ran into Rubin, the U.S. veteran who stunned World No. 1 and defending champion Martina Hingis on Wednesday.

The American, ranked 26th in the world, broke Graf in the opening game and won the first set in 28 minutes. She broke Graf in the opening game of the second set, but the German fought back to win a break in the sixth game to level the set 3-3.

Graf broke Rubin to love in the 10th game to even the score at one set apiece. The third set followed the same pattern, with Rubin jumping to a 2-0 lead before Graf won the last six games.

"It was a bit disappointing how the match ended," Rubin said. "I started off really well, had control going into the second set. It's just disappointing not to take advantage of that opportunity."

Rubin said her escalating errors were produced by pressure from Graf, and from herself.

"Some of them were forced errors, and others were errors where I was going for a little too much, trying to get her out a little further," Rubin said. "At the end, I probably beat myself a little."

Graf certainly didn't feel she produced the game to heat anyone, despite the victory. It was perplexing, she said, since she played so well earlier in the tournament.

"I just played so differently today than I have done the last few days," she said.

"She's somebody that goes for her shots — either make it or miss it. You don't really get that much of a rhythm."

"When I was going for my shots, I just didn't have a good feeling at all. I didn't know where I was hitting them. I missed them by meters. It was just awful."

Graf was looking forward to a day off to regroup, but she thought it odd that the semi-finals of the 1.25 million-dollar Evert Cup, sharing the stage this week with the ATP Tour Champions Cup, were on different days.

"I think it's a very strange schedule altogether," she said. "I played three matches in a row now. That's ridiculous. You have a period of 10 days, and you play three days in a row?"

"The semi-finals, both of them should play the same day."

In the second semi-final, France's Sandrine Testud was to take on U.S. teen sensation Serena Williams.

They have split their four previous meetings, with Testud winning their last encounter at the Australian Open in January 6-2, 2-6, 9-7.

Graf said the confidence Williams has gained from her first WTA tournament victory in Paris less than two weeks ago could make the difference.

"Serena has been playing really well the last few weeks," Graf said of the 17-year-old who beat second seed Lindsay Davenport in the second round and hasn't dropped a set all week.

"She obviously played very well so far this tournament," Graf added. "I think she has a little edge on Sandrine."

IOC member Phil Coles resigns from Australian Olympic body

SYDNEY (AFP) — International Olympic Committee (IOC) delegate Phil Coles said Friday he had resigned from the Australian Olympic Committee for health reasons.

Coles, 67, accused of accepting more than \$560,000 (\$37,500) in hospitality from Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Games bid officials, admitted he had been "careless."

His resignation came ahead of the expected release later Friday of an IOC report into the Salt Lake City bribes-for-votes scandal.

"There has been speculation that the IOC report may contain criticism of some of my actions," Coles said in a statement.

"If so, I accept full

responsibility for them. While I never intended to do anything that would harm the Olympic movement, with hindsight I should have been more circumspect in my actions."

"I've been careless," Coles said. "My problems mounted when allegations surfaced that he received jewellery worth almost \$10,000 (\$6,300) from the head of the unsuccessful 1996 Athens bid. The evidence is expected to be forwarded to a new IOC ethics committee now in the process of being established."

Coles has already stepped down from the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) after being named in the Salt Lake

City bribes scandal.

He said the controversy had had a "significant impact on his health."

"With the pressure of my other duties I do not feel I should continue my employment with the AOC," he said.

"I now intend to work tirelessly within the IOC to repair any damage caused and to win back the public's trust in all aspects of the Olympic movement."

Reports here have suggested he will be cleared of wrongdoing by the committee investigating allegations related to the Salt Lake City scandal. Coles has been an IOC member since 1982.

Fans turn out for funeral of baseball great Joe DiMaggio

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — Some 300 mourning fans of baseball great Joe DiMaggio stood outside the church here Thursday where his family and friends held a private service for "the Yankee Clipper."

About 30 family members and friends attended the service at St. Peter and Paul Church in the Italian neighbourhood of North Beach, where DiMaggio spent most of his childhood and first played baseball with his friends.

"Thank you, Joe," members in the crowd called out as his casket with a cross on it was carried out of the Roman Catholic church. They applauded as he was carried past.

He was carried from the same church where he married his first wife, actress Dorothy Arnold, in 1939. Eleven years later he married silver screen siren Marilyn Monroe.

DiMaggio was respected for the dignity with which he took charge of Monroe's funeral, and the fresh flowers that appeared each day at her grave for years were thought by many to come from him.

Some in the crowd held up pictures of Monroe and DiMaggio on their wedding day. Others wore Yankee caps and T-shirts, or carried baseballs and other pictures of the American hero.

DiMaggio died Monday at the age of 84 at his home in Hollywood, Florida with his brother, two grandchildren and two longtime friends at his bedside.

He played centrefield for the Yankees from 1936 until 1951, and set one of baseball's most revered records with his 56 consecutive games in 1941.

During his tenure, the Yankees won 10 World Series titles in 11 appearances and DiMaggio solidified his status as one of the greats with his consistent strong performances in the Fall Classic.

Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria bid for Nations Cup

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Ghana, Morocco and Nigeria have applied to host the 2000 Nations Cup, the African Football Confederation (CAF) said Friday.

They will compete with original hosts Zimbabwe for the right to stage the 16-nation tournament from January 23 to February 13.

The successful candidate will be named Monday after CAF executives meet in Guinea, Ghana, who want to stage matches in Accra, Cape Coast, Kumasi and Obuasi, hosted the biennial tournament in 1963 and 1978, Morocco in 1988 and Nigeria in 1980.

Zimbabwe, stripped of the event last month for failing to meet stadium and financial targets, won a second hearing following talks with CAF.



Todd Martin from the U.S. returns a forehand against Marcelo Rios from Chile at the Champions Cup play in Indian Wells, California. Martin won 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 (AFP photo)

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre						
CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Robert De Niro.. in RONIN Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' Tom Hanks & Sally Field .. in FORREST GUMP Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:00	CINEMA TEL:5699238 PLAZA Comedian Adel Imam.. in AL ZATEEM Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CINEMA TEL:5677420 CONCORDE Adel Imam & Wafa' Amer .. in ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE 2 FEAR	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria DANCE WITH ME Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Michael Douglas ..in A PERFECT MURDER Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 CLOSED

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Stadium to be ready Aug. 10

AMMAN — Renovation works at Amman International Stadium will be completed by Aug. 10, five days before the opening of the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament, according to an official of the Games' Construction and Preparations Committee. Water reservoirs and a concrete layer will be constructed and the wastewater network will be maintained by the beginning of April, the source added. It is noteworthy that the athletics event will begin on Aug. 12 in the stadium and a number of qualifiers and rehearsals for the opening might be held at the same venue.

Basketball team to leave for Beirut

AMMAN — The national basketball team will leave for Beirut on Monday to hold its first training camp in preparation for the 9th Pan-Arab Games. Hilal Barakat, Jan Sahleh, Husam Lutfi, Yousef Abu Baker, Ala' Bilbeisi, Faisal Nsour, Ayman Du'ais, Mohammad Shamali, Ma'en Odeh, Musa Salah, Ghazi Naber, Yousef Zaghoul, Ashraf Samara, Nasser Bassam, Ihab Emsih and Fadi Saqqa will play five friendlies against a number of Lebanon's top basketball teams, including Tadamon, Kahbra, Wardieb, Homentmen and Antranig clubs.

Madaba hosts 2 auto sports events

AMMAN — Madaba's Automobile Complex in conjunction with the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan will hold two events this month — a four-wheel-drive competition on March 26, and a speed test on March 30.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Prince Faisal to head Higher Organising Committee; UAE to lend TV equipment

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — HRH Prince Faisal will head the Higher Organising Committee of the 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Tournament) which will be held in Amman this summer.

The committee, which includes officials from the Ministry of Sports and Youth in addition to the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC), was previously headed by His Majesty King Abdullah.

Meanwhile, one of the major problems facing the Games seems to have been resolved when the UAE TV announced that it would lend Jordan Television (JTV) the necessary equipment to cover the Aug. 15-31 event.

"It was estimated that JTV needed JD6 million to acquire equipment and manpower to cover the event properly. Now that has been solved," JOC Vice President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz told the Jordan Times Friday.

Solving the coverage issue paves the way for the signing of the promotion and marketing rights agreement with the Saudi firm RAF for

\$1.5 million paid to Jordan in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Since the Arab Sports Federation (ASF) advanced the date of the upcoming Games to 1999 instead of 2001, the Council of Arab Sports Ministers has been trying to generate aid to the Kingdom.

The Jordanian government had initially earmarked JD18 million for the event and additional sponsorship from Jordan's bid was secured by exempting Jordan from the 50 per cent ASF margin of profit on promotion and television coverage.

The ministerial committee charged with overseeing the Kingdom's preparations pledged their support for the Amman Games, saying they would recommend to the Arab League that Jordan receive additional funding and assistance.

They will also try to garner more support from the Gulf Cooperation Council and other states capable of sponsoring the mega-event to improve the Kingdom's infrastructure and update its sports facilities.

Isam Aridah, the director

Fawwaz gets Olympic Solidarity position

JORDAN OLYMPIC Committee (JOC) Vice President Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz has been named by the Committee of Olympic Solidarity as International Course Director for Sports Administration.

Fawwaz last week attended the Olympic Solidarity meetings in London under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

According to the letter of designation Fawwaz will "carry out duties within the region of the Olympic Council of Asia and undertake other tasks should the need arise."

This is the first time a Jordanian official has been appointed to this position by the IOC.

Fawwaz told the Jordan Times that the first course will be held in Amman to qualify a certain number of participants as lecturers on the issue.

of the Games returned from Egypt Thursday after securing an additional \$300,000 in sponsorship from the Council of Arab Sports Ministers bringing the total amount of aid granted so far to \$500,000.

Meanwhile, 16 countries have confirmed participation. They are in addition to the hosts, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Oman, Lebanon and

Palestine have not finalised the nature of participation while organisers were still awaiting initial word from the UAE and Bahrain.

The preliminary number of 26 events is expected to be trimmed. A total of eight events were set to be scrapped with the number of participating teams below the required minimum of five teams for men and four for women will be cancelled.

The events are women's

fencing, handball, karate, squash, fin swimming and men's badminton, horse endurance, and fin swimming.

The 8th Pan Arab Games in Beirut had 19 countries taking part in 20 sports events.

According to officials, belated confirmation by some countries was mainly due to the preference of professional athletes to participate in the World Athletics Championships which coincide with the Games. Officials expected the strain between Gulf countries and Iraq to also affect the Games.

With only five months remaining the building of sports facilities is said to be on time. Mainly the construction of a JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity, and the Olympic-size swimming pool which has come under heavy criticism for not being covered to be utilised in winter.

However, work on the track and field stadium, in addition to installing and upgrading facilities with electronic timing machines and other requirements was

moving at a slower pace.

Moreover, JOC officials have recently expressed concern that the other main point as host country was the inadequate and lax attitude of some federations overseeing the training of athletes.

Grappling with a host of administrative and organisational issues seems to have shifted the focus from this technical aspect of the event.

That concern was echoed by Mohammad Khair Mamsar, who took over the portfolio of Sports and Youth in the newly appointed Cabinet, and immediately announced an emergency plan to activate all committees and "get the ball rolling."

The last regional event Jordan took part in was the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December, where Jordan only managed five medals, four by the taekwondo team. The rest of the athletes failed to even match their own national records.



Promoter Don King (C) holds up the arms of WBC Champion Lennox Lewis from London, England (R) and WBA heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield (R) after the weigh-in for the boxers at Madison Square Garden in New York. Lewis will fight for the championship against Holyfield to be held at Madison Square Garden today March (AFP photo)

Payton among nine NBA players named to U.S. squad

COLORADO SPRINGS (AFP) — Seattle guard Gary Payton was the only member of the 1996 United States Olympic gold medal winners among nine players named to defend the crown at the 2000 Sydney Games.

A new generation of National Basketball Association (NBA) standouts will form the U.S. team, which must first qualify for the Olympics at the 10-team Tournament of the Americas July 14-25 at San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Joining Payton will be forwards Tim Duncan of San Antonio, Kevin Garnett of Minnesota, Vin Baker of Seattle and Tom Gugliotta of Phoenix plus guards Allan Houston of New York, Tim Hardaway of Miami, Steve Smith of Atlanta and Jason Kidd of Phoenix.

"It's a lifelong dream," Gugliotta said. "When you're a kid playing basketball, to have the opportunity to be an Olympian and to play for a gold medal is just a dream come true."

Three other players from outside the NBA ranks will be named to fill out the 12-man roster for the qualifying event, but an NBA trio will be named next year to replace them on the roster for Sydney.

Most of the players were to have played at last year's World Championships in Athens, but NBA players boycotted the event due to the labour feud that has cut the current NBA season to 50 games in 90 days.

"I'm just happy that I have the opportunity to represent my country this summer and hopefully in the year 2000 in Sydney," Kidd said.

"It's an honour to be able to play with the best in the world — not just our team, but the best in other countries. So, to have this opportunity is a kid's dream, an ultimate goal."

Los Angeles centre Shaquille O'Neal and Detroit forward Grant Hill, both members of the 1996 U.S. Olympic "Dream Team" lineup, are expected to be among those named to the final Olympic squad next year.

Hill would have been among those named Wednesday but he is getting married in July and would not be available for the qualifying event.

Smith played on the 1994 U.S. World Championship team. Hardaway was to have been on that team but tore left knee ligaments before the 1993-1994 NBA season and missed taking part in the event.

The U.S. team will be huge favourites to dominate the qualifying event, which decided two berths for Sydney.

Canada and Puerto Rico, both likely to feature some NBA talent, have already qualified for the event. Seven other teams from South and Central America will join them barely two weeks after the NBA Finals conclude.

"This is a multitasking, versatile team that I think will be very exciting to coach," said U.S. coach Rudy Tomjanovich, who also guides the Houston Rockets.

The committee selected nine players who are all capable of playing more than one position. I think this versatility is very important as it will allow our coaching staff the flexibility of playing many different combinations."

Clippers finally win after record-tying 17 losses

LOS ANGELES (R) — Just when they had the record for the worst start in NBA history in their sights, the Los Angeles Clippers blew a chance for sole possession of the all-time futility mark by actually winning a game.

After matching the 1988-89 Miami Heat's NBA record by losing their first 17 contests, the Clippers finally put together a solid effort from start to finish for a 106-92 victory over the Sacramento Kings on Thursday.

Lorenzen Wright grabbed an NBA season-high 25 rebounds and Darrick Martin led seven players in double figures with 18 points.

The Kings pulled within three — 91-88 — midway through the final period, but the Clippers managed to avoid their usual fourth quarter collapse as Martin nailed a 3-pointer and Eric Piatkowski, who finished with 16 points, drained another from long range to make it 97-88.

Lamond Murray scored 15 points, rookie Tyrone Nesby and Maurice Taylor collected 13 apiece and Wright added 12 for the Clippers, who outscored the Kings 26-17 in the fourth quarter.

In Miami, Alonzo Mourning had another big game with 23 points and 16 rebounds and Clarence Weatherspoon added 22 points off the bench as the heat extended their home winning streak to nine with an 83-73 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Mourning was 9-of-11 from the field, scoring 20 of his team's 37 first-half points.

The heat erased 42-37 halftime deficit with a

14-0 third-quarter tear, outscoring Toronto 28-8 in the period.

In Chicago, the Seattle SuperSonics ended their longest losing streak in eight years in a city where they had won only once in the last 15 years.

Gary Payton scored 25 points, including a pair of key baskets down the stretch, as the Sonics halted a five-game slide with a 92-83 victory over the Chicago Bulls.

In Houston, Hakeem Olajuwon scored a season-high 31 points, including several key baskets down the stretch to lead the Rockets to a 102-91 victory over the Vancouver Grizzlies, who suffered their 10th straight loss.

Charles Barkley had 24 points and 16 rebounds for the rockets, who have won four of their last five games.

At Utah, Karl Malone returned from a first-half leg injury to score 10 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and make a key steal in the waning moments as the Jazz held on for a 94-89 victory over the Denver Nuggets.

Denver's Antonio McDyess poured in 39 points, including 15 in the final period, and grabbed 11 rebounds, but was unable to lift the Nuggets to their first win in 11 road games this season.

In Atlanta, Alan Henderson and Dikembe Mutombo each scored 18 points as the Hawks avoided falling under .500 for the first time in more than two years with an 99-85 victory over the Boston Celtics.

Steve Smith added 17 for the Hawks and

Henderson scored 11 points in the third quarter, when Atlanta used a 28-14 spurt to open a 76-61 lead. The Celtics got no closer than nine in the final period.

In New York, Marcus Camby celebrated his new five-year, \$32 million contract extension by having his best game as a Knick with 19 points and 12 rebounds to lead his team to a 98-86 victory over the Washington Wizards.

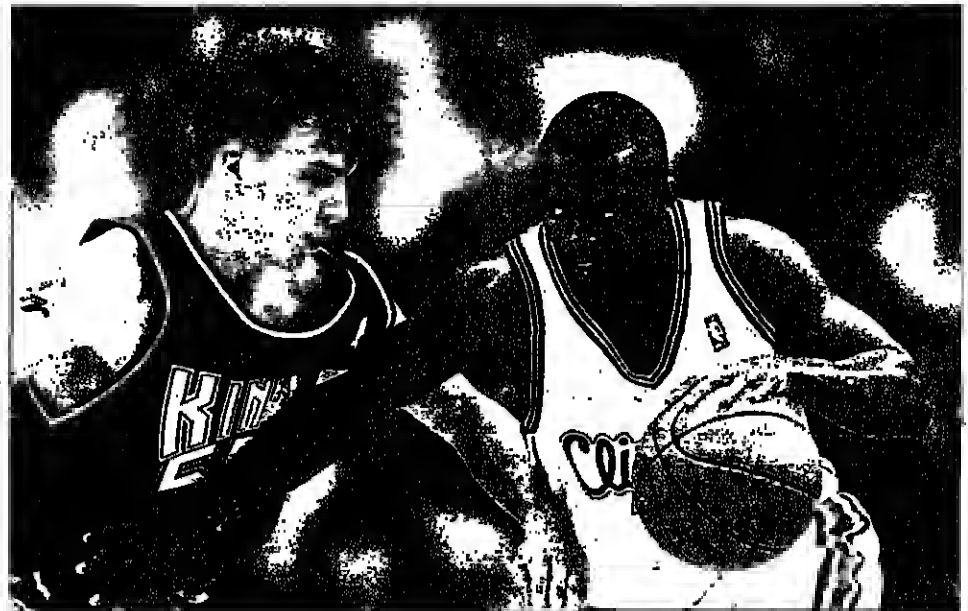
Allan Houston also scored 19 for New York, which won despite the absence of star centre Patrick Ewing, sidelined by left Achilles tendinitis.

New York had a season-high 29 assists and a season-low 10 turnovers. In Dallas, Gary Trent had 21 points and 10 rebounds to lead three double-doubles by the starting frontcourt as the Mavericks snapped a four-game losing streak by beating the slumping Orlando Magic 93-76.

Fellow forward A.C. Green had 13 points and 10 rebounds and centre Shawn Bradley added 10 and 10 for the Mavericks, who held Orlando to 32 second-half points.

At Golden State, Donyell Marshall scored nine of his 14 points in the fourth quarter and Chris Mills hit a trio of key jumpers in the final minutes as the Warriors posted a 89-82 win over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Mills also finished with 14 points for the Warriors who recorded their seventh straight home win.



Darrick Martin of the Los Angeles Clippers (R) drives past Jason Williams of the Sacramento Kings during their game in Los Angeles, Ca. The Clippers won the game, 106-92, to record their first win of the season (AFP photo)

Three-way swap highlights NBA transfer deadline day

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP) — A three-team swap on the deadline day for National Basketball Association transfers saw guards Stephon Marbury, Terrell Brandon and Sam Cassell switch to new clubs.

The nine-player deal was the day's biggest move. It saw Marbury leave the Minnesota Timberwolves for the New Jersey Nets, who sent Cassell to Milwaukee while the Bucks sent Brandon here to replace Marbury.

Marbury, 22, said he plans to sign a six-year, \$71 million contract extension with the Nets by Saturday rather than become a free agent after the season.

He has sparked Minnesota to a 12-6 mark with 17.7 points and 9.3 assists a game in the last year of a three-season, \$6.7 million deal.

The Nets also received guards Chris Carr and Elliot Perry and forward

for forward Tim Thomas and centre Scott Williams.

Other swaps made in the last possible hours saw Houston re-acquire guard Sam Mack from Vancouver for guard Rodrick Rhodes and Boston land centre Vitaly Potapenko from Cleveland for center Andrew DeClercq and a future first-round draft pick.

Another deal that will have no immediate impact on either team saw Philadelphia trade the rights to forward Mirsad Turkcan to the New York Knicks for a 1999 first-round pick.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TARIK HUSSEIN
©1999 TARIK HUSSEIN, INC.

COUNT THE WAY

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ A K 9 4
♥ 7 4
♦ J 10 8 6
♣ K 9 4

WEST
♠ J 6
♥ A K Q 10 6
♦ 2
♣ Q 8 7 5 3

EAST
♠ Q 10 8 5 3 2
♥ J 8 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ A 10

SOUTH
♠ 7
♥ D S 2
♦ A K Q 9 5
♣ A J 6 2

The bidding:
SOUTH 10
NORTH 10
WEST 24
EAST 50

Opening lead: King of ♠

The finesse is a magnet for many players. Give them the chance and they will grab it without even bothering to check on its possibility of success.

North-South bid quickly and easily to their best spot. With a singleton in partner's suit and three potential losers in the overcaller's hearts, South had no interest in

claim even though North had shown a good hand.

West cashed two top hearts and shifted to the jack of spades. Declarer waited no time in choosing an inferior line. After drawing trumps in three rounds, the king of clubs was cashed and a club was led off dummy. When East showed out, declarer had to concede a club for down one.

South was in too much of a hurry to take the club finesse. It could have done no harm, only good, to have done so about the hand.

After drawing three rounds of trumps, ending on the table, declarer should cash the king of spades, discarding a club from hand, then ruff a spade, noting West's heart discard. A heart ruffed in dummy, to which both defenders follow, now gives declarer a perfect count. East started with six spades, three hearts and three diamonds, and therefore can hold no more than one club. Unless that is either a singleton queen or ten, the contract stands no chance.

Declarer must lead a club to the ace. When East produces the ten, all is well. The proven finesse of the nine of clubs is taken next, and another well-played game comes home.

E6

Reliable, clean, scratch-free E6 slide processing by professional. Push & pull processing available, with or without mounts. Call 464 1559 for information.

Job Opportunity

A foreign company is in need of a staff to work full time in its office in Shmeisani. Candidates must have fluency in English, with computer knowledge and experience in accounting.

Applicants must apply in person in the company's office on Saturday March 13 and Sunday March 14, 1999 from 9:00 to 12:00.

Please contact Mr. Sami on Tel. No. 5666191 for appointment.



A group of fans dismayed by the Los Angeles Clippers' losing streak put bags over their heads at the Sacramento Kings-Clippers game at the Los Angeles Sports Arena (AP photo)

Iran president says West wants better ties with Iran

Rafsanjani blames protests on Italian government

TEHRAN (Agencies) — President Mohammad Khatami, returning from a successful trip to Italy, said in remarks broadcast Friday that there is a "great desire" in the West to expand economic and other ties with Iran.

But, he cautioned, that "some circles and powers" are opposed to Iran's increasing links with the West and have even "resorted to some mischief in this regard." Khatami did not elaborate but it is known that hardliners in the ruling clergy are opposed to his democratic and economic reforms and his openness to the West. Khatami could also have been referring to the United States, whose laws ban international investment of more than \$20 million in Iran.

"However, Iran and the West are determined to expand these relations on the basis of mutual respect," Khatami was quoted as saying by Iranian radio.

It said Khatami made the comments on Thursday at Tehran's Mehrabad airport when he returned from a three-day trip, hailed by Italian and Iranian officials as an unqualified success.

Meanwhile, former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Friday accused the Italian government of authorising opposition protests against Khatami.

"It was an insult and they could have very easily prevented them," he said during weekly prayers at Tehran University.

The Italians "authorised it all

in the so-called name of freedom," said Rafsanjani, head of the Expediency Council, the Islamic Republic's highest political body.

Khatami's three-day visit to Italy was occasionally marred by Iranian opposition protesters who threw paint-filled eggs on his car and held demonstrations.

Rafsanjani also lashed out at media "interpretations" of Khatami's historic visit that ended Thursday.

"They said his visit ended the isolation of Iran. It is untrue because Iran was never isolated," he said.

But Rafsanjani did not mention Salman Rushdie, the Indian-born British author famously condemned to death in 1979 by the Islamic republic's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Rushdie was in Italy on Wednesday to receive an honorary degree from Turin University.

The Iranian press on Thursday condemned Rushdie's presence as an insult to Iran and said the Italian foreign ministry was responsible.

But the state news agency IRNA said Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini had sent a letter to his Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharazi expressing "regret" that the two visits coincided and hoping the incident would not affect ties.

During the visit, Italy's state energy company ENI proposed oil production deals worth \$2 billion to \$3 billion,

Iran's deputy oil minister, Mehdi Hosseini, said. He said petrochemical projects were also discussed.

"There is a great desire for cooperation with Iran at various international levels," Khatami was quoted as saying.

Khatami held talks with Italian leaders during his stay in Rome and an unprecedented meeting with Pope John Paul II which the Iranian president described as "vital."

The Iranian head of state said Iran and Italy shared identical views on a number of questions including Iraq and Afghanistan. "Iran and Italy will seek to expand their relations in a number of fields," he added.

But analysts say Khatami's political rivals will try to minimise the political and economic gains from the first state visit to a Western nation by an Iranian leader since the 1979 Islamic revolution installed the rule of the clergy in the country.

Saeed Leylaz, a political analyst who writes for several Iranian newspapers, said Khatami's visit was of crucial importance to the country's ailing economy.

"Unfortunately, experience has shown that the hardliners are willing to undermine the whole Islamic system just to undermine Khatami," Leylaz said.

Still, the majority of Iranians are behind Khatami and have the maturity to understand what he is trying to achieve, Leylaz said.



MINIATURE NEW YORK: Scenemaker Jorge Arnes walks through a miniature New York skyline, making final adjustments at Legoland in Carlsbad, California. The skyline is part of Legoland's Mini-Land area, which took more than 20 million Lego bricks to build. The Danish-owned amusement park, which cost over \$130 million to build, is scheduled to open on March 20 (AP photo)

Extreme right in alliance for Israel's polls

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Three parties opposed to any further withdrawals from the Palestinian territories announced on Friday the formation of a far-right alliance for Israeli general elections in May.

Benny Begin, 56, a defector from the ruling Likud Party and son of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, will lead the united front which will draw up a single list of candidates for the May 17 parliamentary polls.

The alliance brings together parties which support the creation of a Greater Israel and are opposed to the Oslo peace accords with the Palestinians and any further territorial concessions.

The three are: Molodet, or Fatherland, which has two deputies in the outgoing parliament; Begin's newly created Herut Party (Freedom); and a new ultra-Nationalist religious party, Tekuma (Renewal).

Molodet advocates expelling Arabs from Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Begin will head the front's list of candidates, followed by Molodet leader Rehavam Zeevi and Tekuma's Hanan Porat, an MP who defected recently from the National Religious Party.

The front, which does not yet have a name, boasts a total of six members from the outgoing parliament and hopes to win two to three times more seats in

the May vote. It draws its support mainly from among the 160,000 Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories.

Begin broke with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the government signed agreements with the Palestinians to cede more West Bank territory.

He is challenging Netanyahu for the prime ministership in a vote to be held simultaneously with the parliamentary polls.

It draws its support mainly from among the 160,000 Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories.

Begin broke with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the government signed agreements with the Palestinians to cede more West Bank territory.

He is challenging Netanyahu for the prime ministership in a vote to be held simultaneously with the parliamentary polls.

Begin broke with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the government signed agreements with the Palestinians to cede more West Bank territory.

He is challenging Netanyahu for the prime ministership in a vote to be held simultaneously with the parliamentary polls.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Saudi to admit Taliban-certified pilgrims

KABUL (AFP) — The Taliban and Saudi Arabian authorities have signed a protocol under which only Afghans certified by the Islamic militia would be allowed on the pilgrimage to Mecca, officials said Friday. The accord applies also to people living in areas outside the control of the Taliban, deputy minister Mawlawi Mohammad Moslem Haqqani said. Haqqani, who is in charge of haj (pilgrimage) and religious trusts, did not say where and when the protocol was signed. "Under the protocol, pilgrims can go to Saudi Arabia only after we have certified them," he said.

Sudan rebels release ICRC hostages

NAIROBI (AFP) — The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) released two International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegates in southern Sudan on Friday after holding them since Feb. 18, the ICRC announced in Nairobi. The delegates were flown to Yirol, in Bahr el Ghazal state, from Bentiu, in Western Upper Nile state, aboard a non-ICRC plane, a statement said. "Their health condition is satisfactory," the statement said, adding that the ICRC had not been informed beforehand that they were being released.

Israel arrests Palestinians over attack

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel said Thursday its security forces arrested the leader of an attack on an Israeli soldier last December, described as an attempted lynch. An Israeli army statement said soldiers and security agents arrested Yousef Subhi Abu Kamar, a resident of a refugee camp in Gaza who attends a West Bank university near the site of the incident, along with several other Palestinians. Cpl. Assaf Meyara and an Israeli civilian came under attack by an angry mob of Palestinian demonstrators while driving through a main West Bank intersection. The Israeli military said Abu Kamar was seen in news photographs striking Meyara with a rock.

Hamas supporters rally in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Hundreds of Hamas supporters held a peaceful rally in this West Bank town to prepare for the first anniversary of the death of one of the group's military leaders, witnesses said. Some 700 sympathisers of the militant Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) rallied to commemorate Mohieddin Sharif, the military leader of the Izzeddine Al Qassam Brigades, whose mangled body was found next to a burnt out car in the West Bank city of Ramallah in April last year. Demonstrators carried aloft pictures of Hamas' spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin along with portraits of other leaders held in Israeli jails and shouted slogans in support of Izzeddine Al Qassam, the witnesses said.

'Bomb blasts near U.N. offices in Iraq'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Two bombs exploded this week near U.N. offices in northern Iraq, causing one death and several injuries, the United Nations said Thursday. A bomb went off Wednesday in the Iraqi town of Dahuk some 100 metres away from the offices of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said. The unidentified man who was carrying the bomb was killed in the attack and four people were slightly injured. Eckhard said, adding that no U.N. personnel were hurt.

Peace song banned at ceremony

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's foreign ministry stopped a singer from performing a song at a ceremony to celebrate 20 years of peace between Israel and Egypt, the daily Yediot Ahronot reported on Friday. The Israeli singer Zehava Ben was due to sing in the Forest of Peace park near Tel Aviv at the ceremony on Thursday attended by Egyptian Ambassador Mohamed Bassiouny and the director general of the Israeli foreign ministry, Eitan Ben Tzur, the newspaper said. But several days before, the ceremony foreign ministry officials insisted that the Song for Peace be removed from the programme because it was "too sad." The song, composed in 1970, has long been known as a pacifist anthem and has been banned from army radio.

Cornered Dutch minister blames Israel over El Al crash

AMSTERDAM (R) — Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Annemarie Jorritsma launched a new volley of criticism at Israel on Friday during an inquiry into an El Al cargo plane crash that could end her career and undermine the government.

The embattled minister, speaking on the last day of parliamentary hearings, took her cue from Prime Minister Wim Kok and his predecessor Ruud Lubbers.

They slammed Israel on Thursday for blocking efforts to investigate the 1992 disaster. Forty-three people died when the Boeing 737 slammed into Amsterdam's high-rise

Bijlmer suburb. Since then, hundreds of rescue workers and local residents have complained of health problems ranging from headaches, tiredness and nausea to motor neuron disease.

Revelations last year that the cargo included the chemical DMMP, which can be used to make sarin nerve gas, has strained ties with Israel and shattered confidence in the authorities.

Israel confirmed the presence of DMMP, but said it was non-toxic and destined to test filters. Depleted uranium in the wing ballast was also harmless, government experts said.

Jorritsma has vowed to resign if the inquiry finds she failed in her duty to inform parliament and protect the public during her time as transport minister after the crash.

Political commentators say if she is forced to quit, other ministerial beads are bound to roll.

But on Friday, Jorritsma came out fighting. She blamed El Al for failing to band over all the relevant cargo documents and said she was astonished to learn the state carrier had withheld papers relating to 20 tonnes of missing freight.

The committee unearthed copies of the documents in the United States last month.

"I truly believe we did all that we could. You should not have to resort to diplomatic pressure to force the facts into the open," Jorritsma said. "I want to know why we were not given the information. I find it absolutely incomprehensible."

Jorritsma's criticism echoed Kok and Lubbers. Kok said he was dismayed at Israel's failure to cooperate fully, while Lubbers said he felt angered and let down.

Dutch news agency ANP quoted Netanyahu's aide David Bar-Ilan as saying he regretted any breakdown in communication between El Al and the Dutch government.

"We are sorry if there has been a misunderstanding between El Al and the Dutch authorities. We hope these misunderstandings have been cleared up and that they will not harm the excellent relations between our two countries," he said.

The committee challenged Jorritsma again and again, reminding her of her sometimes contradictory statements and pressing her on her failure to nail down the cargo.

At one point, a visibly irritated Jorritsma refused to answer "non-factual" questions. The committee has said it will present its final report by the end of the month.

Iraq reports U.S., British air attacks

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said U.S. and British planes attacked air defences and civilian targets on Friday in the northern Western-imposed no-fly zone.

A military spokesman was quoted by the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) as saying that "Iraqi defences challenged these planes and compelled them to flee."

U.S. air force jets patrolling Iraq's northern no-fly zone bombed at least one target on Friday, said a U.S. air force official at the jets' home base in Incirlik in southern Turkey.

"At 12:30 local time [0930 GMT] this afternoon, March 12, nine hostile formations violated our national airspace," the Iraqi military spokesman said.

"These formations involved such planes as F-15, F-16 and the British Tornado, supported by the early warning AWACS from inside Turkish airspace."

"They implemented 18 sorties. The hostile planes flew over regions in Erbil, Duhok and Nineveh provinces."

"The hostile warplanes fired seven bombs and missiles on civilian facilities and some ground resistance units' weapons," the spokesman

said. Captain Manning Brown from the U.S. air force in Incirlik said: "At approximately 1:30 p.m. Iraqi time [1030 GMT] U.S. planes responded to Iraqi threats in the northern no-fly zone."

He said it was not yet clear how many sites had been hit.

Such strikes have become a regular event since Baghdad announced in December it would actively oppose the no-fly zones in the north and south of Iraq, imposed by the United States and Britain after the 1991 Gulf War.

Planes from the Incirlik air base patrol Iraqi skies north of the 36th Parallel to protect the area's Kurdish population from attack by Baghdad. A similar zone in the south is aimed at protecting the Shi'ites there.

Most of northern Iraq is under the control of two Iraqi Kurdish parties which broke away from Baghdad at the end of the Gulf War, but a patch of territory around the city of Mosul remains in the hands of the Iraqi government.

Baghdad says it does not recognise the no-fly zones and would keep on defying Western warplanes at all costs.

Arens warns Lebanon is a 'powderkeg'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens warned Friday that the situation in Lebanon was a "powderkeg" which could explode if guerrillas continue attacking Israeli occupation forces.

Speaking after talks here with visiting U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen, Arens said: "Lebanon, under control of Syria, has become a powderkeg."

"There is no way of telling how far it could escalate if Hizbollah terrorist actions are not halted," Arens said, referring to the Islamic militia which spearheads the battle against the Israeli-occupied buffer zone in south Lebanon.

Asked about various proposals concerning an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, Cohen responded that "Israel will

have to be satisfied that its security is protected."

"I do not wish to in any way give an indication at this point about how this should be resolved," he said.

Debate over Israel's 21-year-old military presence in its northern neighbour flared last month after seven Israeli soldiers, including the top general in south Lebanon, were killed by Hizbollah guerrillas in less than a week.

The issue has become a key stake in campaigning for May general elections in Israel, with opposition candidates for prime minister vowing to get Israeli troops out of Lebanon within a year if elected.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also promised to bring the troops home, but has rejected either a unilateral pullout or the terms set by

Lebanon and Israel for full peace negotiations — an Israeli agreement to also withdraw from the Golan Heights occupied in 1967.

After the recent spate of attacks, Netanyahu also warned that Israel would respond with increasing severity to future Hizbollah attacks either in the occupied zone or on northern Israel.

Israel launched 23 air raids across Lebanon after the recent losses and a senior Israeli officer warned on Wednesday that this was only a "preliminary response" to the Hizbollah attacks.

Arens last week suggested that Israel could also start hitting civilian targets in Lebanon — an escalation which would mean scrapping an internationally monitored 1996 truce accord with Hizbollah.

Barak rating same despite new front

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The new electoral alliance between Labour leader Ehud Barak and former Foreign Minister David Levy failed to provide the hoped for boost in Barak's bid to unseat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to opinion polls published Friday.

Barak leads Netanyahu in two surveys released Friday by the same narrow five-point margin of previous weeks while the two men were in a dead heat in a third poll with barely two months to go to election day.

Labour, the main opposition party, had been hoping the cre-

ation of the One Israel alliance with Levy's centrist Geshet Party would draw new support from Sephardic voters attracted to the Moroccan-born former foreign minister.

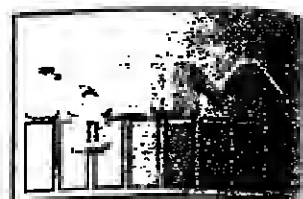
Sephardic Jews — those from North African and Middle Eastern countries — have traditionally shunned the Labour Party and its Ashkenazi or European leaders in favour of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud bloc.

The alliance also brought in a left-leaning religious movement, Meimad, in hopes of attracting observant voters who in the past were repelled by the anti-religious image of

the Labour Party. But the united front failed to have an appreciable impact on Barak's standing in the surveys of voter preferences for prime minister.

In a poll by the Dahaf Institute for the Yediot Ahronot newspaper, Barak is credited with 46 per cent of the ballots to 41 per cent for Netanyahu, with the other 13 per cent saying they would not vote.

A second survey for the Labour Party by an independent polling institute found the same margin in favour of Barak — 49 per cent to 44 per cent, but with the rest undecided.



Vietnam's version of fruitcake causes same problems

HANOI (AP) — The Tet lunar new year festival ended Feb. 18, but Vietnam is still grappling with that well-known holiday problem: leftovers. In this case, it's the ubiquitous banh chung, a square sticky rice cake that no one seems to like but which is an essential part of the new year celebrations. Shopkeepers across the country are offering 50 per cent off banh chung even as housewives from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City are wondering how to get rid of the leftover ones in the fridge. As with fruitcake, the most popular solution seems to be to give the banh chung to someone else. "We invite our relatives in from the countryside and give it to them," said Trang, a development worker in Hue who gave only one name. "They are poor, so they will eat it."

Yard display vents daughter's anger

SUNNYSIDE (AP) — The 2-metre-tall scarlet "A" in Dixie Lyczewski's front yard will stay, but at least the flashing strobe light has been turned off. The yard display is a result of a dispute between Mrs. Lyczewski and her husband, Tim. They separated last August after 26 years of marriage. Their 20-year-old daughter, Sarah, built the display using plastic irrigation pipe wrapped in red garlands three months ago. It's shaped like the letter "A," as in "adultery." Mrs. Lyczewski agreed to turn off a flashing strobe light on the display after 208 residents filed a petition to have the display removed and the city brought a public-nuisance complaint.

Malaysian voter finds he's a woman

KOTA KINABALU (AFP) — A 28-year-old man found he was registered as a woman when he checked the electoral roll ahead of elections in the eastern state of Sabah starting Friday, a newspaper reported. The Daily Express said Zendoh Mastakol "got the shock of his life" when he found his identity card number showed a woman by the name of Anisah Radali, registered in an area south of the state capital of Kota Kinabalu. Mastakol reportedly said he registered as a voter in a different area located north of the capital some seven years ago.

Japan politicians sue over 'Viagra cabinet' story

TOKYO (R) — Two former Japanese cabinet ministers on Friday sued a magazine publisher for printing a story that said they took the anti-impotence drug Viagra. Former cabinet secretaries Seiichiro Kajiyama, 72, and Kazuo Murakawa, 67, sued Tokyo-based publisher Shinchosha Co. and demanded an apology for a story that claimed the two used the drug. "We have never used Viagra," the two politicians said in a statement. They said that the story, published in the Feb. 4 edition of the Shukan Shincho magazine, had given the false impression that the two suffered from impotence.

Man says he was fired for rejecting Gandhi teachings

NASHVILLE (AP) — Kevin Cundiff says his company fired him after unsuccessfully trying to force him to study the teachings of Mohandas Gandhi. Cundiff is fighting back. Cundiff, a former engineering director of Stinger Industries Inc. of Murfreesboro, filed a lawsuit this week against the company, saying his civil rights were violated when he was urged to study "materials on the life and teachings of Gandhi" and apply what he learned. Among the required readings, he said, was "A Higher Standard of Leadership. Lessons From the Life of Gandhi." The book contains religious and spiritual principles taught by the Hindu leader.

Famine has killed over three million North Koreans

rebels clash
in
Columbia

boy
in
road

wounds
on
bus

journalist
in
New Delhi